

About

Online Poker



Nicolae Sfetcu



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Published by Nicolae Sfetcu

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Contents

About Online Poker	1
About Online Poker	15
Online poker	16
Overview	16
Legality	17
Integrity and fairness.....	17
Differences with conventional poker	18
Tracking play.....	19
Bonuses	19
Compatibility.....	19
Online poker portal	19
Card games	20
The deck or pack.....	20
The deal.....	20
The rules	21
Types of card games.....	23
Poker	27
Game play	27
History	28
Quotations.....	29
References.....	30
Poker topics.....	31
Poker rules	33
Poker hands.....	33
General rules	33
Ranking of hands	34
Variations	34
Dead man's hand	35
The hand in popular culture	36
Adapting to 7-card games	37

Dominating hand	37
Drawing hand	38
Made hand.....	38
Nut hand	38
Pocket Aces.....	39
Starting hand.....	40
Non-standard poker hand.....	40
Cats and dogs	42
Kilters.....	42
Rank of hands	42
Standard ranking.....	42
Low-poker ranking.....	46
Betting structure	49
Procedure	49
Forced bets.....	51
Straddle bets	55
Limits	55
Table stakes rules.....	58
Big bet.....	61
Statistical Analysis	61
Examples.....	62
Blind	63
Chopping the blinds	63
Why players chop.....	63
Ethics of chopping.....	64
General etiquette	64
Reference.....	64
Closed.....	65
Post oak bluff	65
Pot	65
Split.....	66
River	67
Showdown	67

Table stakes.....	68
Poker variants	68
Popular poker variants	68
Other poker variants.....	68
Blind man's bluff.....	71
Casino game	71
House advantage	72
Categories of casino games.....	72
Common table games.....	72
Common random number games (non-table)	73
Common gaming machines.....	73
Four card poker	74
Let It Ride.	74
How to Play.....	75
Strategy and house edge.....	76
Pai gow poker	77
Object of the Game	77
The Deal	77
Hand Rankings.....	77
Determining a Win.....	78
Basic Strategy.....	78
Pyramid poker.....	80
Red Dog.....	80
References.....	81
Three card poker	81
Pairplus	82
Ante and Play	82
Three card brag.....	83
Rules	83
Hand ranks.....	83
Betting	83
Shuffling	84
Chicago	84

Hand scores	84
Basic rules	84
Variations	85
Chinese poker	86
Community card poker	86
Texas hold 'em.....	87
Omaha hold 'em	87
Pineapple - Crazy Pineapple - Tahoe hold 'em.....	88
Manila	88
"Home" games	89
Counterfeit.....	91
Omaha hold 'em	92
Texas hold 'em.....	92
Badugi.....	92
Omaha hold 'em	92
Explanation.....	93
Omaha Hi/Lo.....	94
Pot Limit Omaha	95
Variations	96
Texas hold 'em.....	96
Origins.....	96
Rules	97
Examples.....	99
Starting hand terminology and notation.....	100
Strategy	101
In popular culture	101
Notes.....	102
Poker probability (Texas hold 'em)	103
Starting hands.....	104
The flop.....	110
After the flop	113
Notes.....	117
References.....	118

Texas hold 'em hands	118
Essentials.....	119
Texas hold 'em hand groups	119
Notes.....	120
Texas Hold'em Bonus Poker	120
Rules	120
Player Strategy	121
WinHoldEm	121
Dealer's choice	122
Draw poker	122
Standard five-card draw	122
Other draw games	122
"Home" games	126
Ad hoc variants.....	128
Anaconda.....	128
Simple Play.....	128
Variations	129
Badugi.....	129
Play of the hand.....	130
Hand evaluation.....	130
Example hand	131
Betting structures.....	131
Strategy	132
Five-card draw	132
Sample deal.....	133
Lowball.....	134
References.....	134
H.O.S.E.....	134
H.O.R.S.E.....	135
Kuhn poker	135
References.....	136
Old Pink Poker.....	136
Strip poker	136

Rules	136
Popularity	137
Stud poker	138
General variations	138
Specific variants	139
Caribbean stud poker	143
Caribbean Stud Poker in the United Kingdom	145
Player Strategy	146
Five-card stud	146
Description of play	146
High-low and other variants	147
Roll your own	148
Seven twenty-seven	148
Seven-card stud	149
Quick play overview	149
In-depth play rules	150
Sample deal	150
Twist	151
Public cardroom rules	152
Popular poker variants	152
Waiting lists	152
Chips	152
Rake	152
Common rules	152
Legality	153
One player to a hand	154
Poker dealer	154
Professional dealers	154
Mechanics of dealing	155
Responsibilities during a hand	156
Cheating in poker	157
Minimal-skill methods	157
Skilled methods	158

Collusion	158
Rule variations	159
Overview	159
High-low split	160
Wild card	161
Bug	162
Stripped deck	162
Community card	163
Turn	163
Poker strategy	165
The fundamental theorem of poker	165
Pot odds and poker probabilities	165
Deception	165
Position	166
Reasons to raise	166
Reasons to call	167
Gap concept	167
Sandwich effect	167
Loose/tight play	168
Aggressive/passive play	168
Hand reading and tells	168
Table image and opponent profiling	168
Equity	169
Short-handed considerations	169
Structure considerations	169
Notes	170
Fundamental theorem of poker	170
An example	170
Multi-way pots and implicit collusion	171
Morton's theorem	172
An example	172
Analysis	173
Pot odds	174

Simple pot odds.....	175
Implied pot odds.....	175
Reverse implied pot odds.....	176
Manipulating pot odds.....	176
Bluffing frequency.....	177
References.....	177
Dead money.....	177
Poker play	178
Aggression	178
Bluff	179
Pure Bluff.....	179
Semi-bluff	179
Bluffing circumstances.....	179
Optimal bluffing frequency.....	180
Bluff (the game)	180
References.....	180
Check-raise	181
Defense.....	181
Draw.....	181
Outs.....	182
Types of draws	182
Isolation	183
Position	184
Protection.....	184
Slow play	185
Relationship between slow playing and bluffing.....	186
Check raising as a slow play.....	186
Fishing for the overcall.....	186
References.....	187
Steal	187
Poker probability	188
Frequency of 5 card poker hands.....	188
Derivation.....	188

Frequency of 7 card poker hands.....	190
Poker psychology	190
Tell	191
References.....	191
Tilt.....	192
Being "on tilt"	192
Putting others "on tilt"	192
Poker gameplay and terminology.....	194
Bad beat.....	194
Reacting to bad beats.....	194
Bad beat jackpot	195
Cards speak	195
Declaration	196
Declaring target in a split pot	196
Declaring number of cards to draw.....	196
Other declarations	196
Flop.....	197
Freeroll.....	197
Out.....	198
Poker equipment.....	198
Button	199
History	199
Dealer button	200
Other buttons.....	200
References.....	201
Playing card.....	201
History	201
Playing cards today.....	205
Playing card symbols in Unicode	209
References.....	210
Burn card.....	210
Notes.....	210
Curse of Scotland.....	211

High card by suit.....	211
Rouder	212
Poker chip	212
Construction and design.....	213
Colors	213
Security.....	214
Rake	214
Mechanism	215
Legality	215
Ring game.....	215
Suited connectors.....	216
Value.....	216
Poker tournaments	218
Entry fees and prizes.....	218
Betting format.....	219
Types of poker	220
Tournament venues	220
Major tournaments.....	220
Chip race	221
Hand-for-hand.....	222
Satellite tournament	223
Poker	223
Tournament director	223
World Poker Tour	223
Player of the Year	225
Results	225
World Series of Poker.....	226
Origins.....	226
Evolution.....	226
Harrah's Takes The Pot.....	227
The Marketing of the <i>WSOP</i>	227
Film coverage of the <i>WSOP</i>	228
The main event.....	229

Poker jargon.....	230
A	230
B	232
C.....	237
D.....	241
E.....	245
F.....	245
G	249
H.....	249
I.....	251
J.....	253
K.....	253
L.....	253
M	254
N.....	255
O	255
P.....	256
Q.....	258
R.....	259
S.....	260
T	264
U	264
V	265
W.....	265
Z.....	266
Rollout	266
Slang names for poker hands	267
Individual card slang.....	267
Five-card hand slang.....	268
Texas hold'em slang	269
Omaha slang	271
Flop slang.....	271
Poker players.....	272

Computer poker players.....	272
Poker Hall of Fame.....	273
World Poker Tour Walk of Fame	274
Poker on television.....	275
History	275
Hole cam	275
License	277
GNU Free Documentation License.....	277
Index	284
About the author	288
Nicolae Sfetcu.....	288

About Online Poker

[Online poker](#) is the game of [poker](#) played over the Internet. It has been partly responsible for a dramatic increase in the number of poker players worldwide. For the year of 2005, revenues from online poker were estimated at US\$200 million per month.^[1]

Home | [Online poker](#) | [Poker rules](#) | [Poker strategy](#) | [Poker tournaments](#) | [Poker jargon](#) |
[Poker players](#) | [Poker on television](#) | [License](#) | [Index](#)

Online poker

Overview

Traditional (or "brick and mortar", B&M) venues for playing poker, such as casinos and poker rooms, may be intimidating for novice players and are located in geographically disparate locations. Brick and mortar casinos are also reluctant to promote poker because it is very difficult for them to profit from it. Though the rake, or time charge, of traditional casinos is often very high, the opportunity costs of running a poker room are even higher. Brick and mortar casinos often make much more money by removing poker rooms and adding more slot machines.

Online venues, by contrast, are dramatically cheaper because they have much smaller overhead costs. For example, adding another table does not take up valuable space like it would for a brick and mortar casino. Online poker rooms tend to be viewed as more player-friendly. For example, the software may prompt the player when it is his or her turn to act. Online poker rooms also allow the players to play for very low stakes (as low as 1¢) and often offer poker freerolls (where there is no entry fee), attracting beginners.

Online venues may be more vulnerable to certain types of fraud, especially collusion between players. However, they also have collusion detection abilities that do not exist in brick and mortar casinos. For example, online poker room security employees can look at the "hand history" of the cards previously played by any player on the site, making patterns of behavior easier to detect than in a casino where colluding players can simply fold their hands without anyone ever knowing the strength of their holding. Online poker rooms also check player's IP addresses in order to prevent players at the same household or at known open proxy servers from playing on the same tables.

The major online poker sites offer varying features to entice new players. One common feature is to offer tournaments called satellites by which the winners gain entry to real-life poker tournaments. It was through one such tournament that Chris Moneymaker won his entry to the 2003 [World Series of Poker](#). He went on to win the main event causing shock in the poker world. The 2004 World Series featured triple the number of players over the 2003 turnout. At least four players in the WSOP final table won their entry through an online cardroom. Like Moneymaker, 2004 winner Greg "Fossilman" Raymer also won his entry at the PokerStars online cardroom.

In October 2004, Sportingbet Plc, at the time the world's largest publicly traded online gaming company (SBT.L), announced the acquisition of ParadisePoker.com, one of the online poker industry's first and largest cardrooms. The \$340 million dollar acquisition marked the first time an online cardroom was owned by a public company. Since then, several other cardroom parent companies have gone public.

In June 2005, PartyGaming, the parent company of the largest online cardroom, PartyPoker, went public on the London Stock Exchange, achieving an initial public offering market value in excess of \$8 billion dollars. At the time of the IPO, ninety-two percent of Party Gaming's income came from poker operations.

In early 2006, PartyGaming moved to acquire EmpirePoker.com from Empire Online. UltimateBet's parent company also listed on the London Stock Exchange and other poker rooms such as PokerStars & Poker.com are rumored to be exploring initial public offerings.^[2]

Legality

From a legal perspective, online poker may differ in some ways from online casino gambling, but many of the same issues do apply. For a discussion of the legality of online gambling in general.

Online poker is legal and regulated in many countries including several nations in and around the Caribbean Sea, and most notably the United Kingdom.^[3]

In February 2005 the North Dakota House of Representatives passed a bill to legalize and regulate online poker and online poker cardroom operators in the state. The legislation required that online poker operations would have to physically locate their entire operations in the state. Testifying before the state Senate Judiciary committee, Nigel Payne, CEO of Sportingbet, the owner of Paradise Poker, pledged to relocate to the state if the bill became law.^[4]

The measure, however, was defeated by the State Senate in March 2005 after the U. S. Department of Justice sent a letter to North Dakota attorney general Wayne Stenehjem stating that online gaming "may" be illegal, and that the pending legislation "might" violate the federal Wire Act. However, many legal experts dispute the DOJ's claim.

North Dakota Rep. Jim Kasper (R-Fargo), the author of the legalization bill, has vowed to continue his efforts, stating that he is "not putting away the idea of getting into Internet gaming licenses in North Dakota" and that the "revenue we missed is too great to pass up." Kasper has also stated that he will introduce the legislation in the 2007 session of the North Dakota legislature.

In response to this and other claims by the DOJ regarding the legality of online poker, many of the major online poker sites stopped advertising their "dot-com" sites in American media. Instead, they created "dot-net" sites that are virtually identical but offer no real money wagering. The ads feature words to the effect of "this is not a gambling website". Televised ads still feature the dot-net conceit but print ads have been trending back toward advertising the dot-coms directly.

Integrity and fairness

As with other forms of online gambling, many critics question whether the operators of such games - especially those located in jurisdictions separate from most of their players - might be engaging in fraud themselves.

Internet discussion forums are rife with unproven allegations of non-random card dealing, possibly to favour house-employed players or "bots" (poker playing software disguised as a human opponent), or to give multiple players good hands thus increasing the bets and the rake, or simply to prevent new players from losing so quickly that they become discouraged. However, there is little more than anecdotal evidence to support such claims, and others argue that the rake is sufficiently large that such abuses would be

unnecessary and foolish. Many claim to see lots of "bad beats" with large hands pitted against others all too often at a rate that seems to be a lot more common than in live games. This might actually be caused by the fact that online cardrooms deal more hands per hour: online players get to see more hands, so their likelihood of seeing more improbable bad beats or randomly large pots is also increased.

However, to date there has been at least one site, ProPoker.com, that has been found to use serverside bots that play with the knowledge of players' cards and the cards yet to be dealt. It has since been shut down, with many players losing the funds they had on the site.

Many online poker sites are certified by bodies such as the Kahnawake Gaming Commission, and major auditing firms like PricewaterhouseCoopers review the fairness of the random_number_generator[5], shuffle, and payouts for some sites.

Differences with conventional poker

There are substantial differences between online poker gaming and conventional, in-person gaming.

One obvious difference is that players do not sit right across from each other, removing any ability to observe others' reactions and body language. Instead, online poker players learn to focus more keenly on betting patterns, reaction time and other behavior [tells](#) that are not physical in nature. Since poker is a game that requires adaptability, successful online players learn to master the new frontiers of their surroundings.

Another less obvious difference is the rate of play. In brick and mortar casinos the dealer has to collect the cards, then shuffle and deal them after every hand. Due to this and other delays common in offline casinos, the average rate of play is around thirty hands per hour. Online casinos, however, do not have these delays; the dealing and shuffling are instant, there are no delays relating to counting chips (for a split pot), and on average the play is faster due to "auto-action" buttons (where the player selects his action before his turn). It is not uncommon for an online poker table to average sixty to eighty hands per hour.

This large difference in rate of play has created another effect among online poker players. In the brick and mortar casino, the only real way to increase your earnings is to increase your limit. In the online world players have another option, play more tables. Unlike a physical casino where it would be nearly impossible to play multiple tables at once, most online poker rooms allow this. Depending on the site, a player might play from 4 to 10 tables at the same time, viewing them each in a separate window on the computer display. For example, a player may make around \$10 per 100 hands at a lower limit game. In a casino, this would earn them under \$4 an hour, which minus dealer tips would probably barely break even. In an online poker room, the same player with the same win rate could play four tables at once, which at 60 hands per hour each would result in an earning of \$24/hour, which is a modest salary for somebody playing online poker. Some online players even play eight or more tables at once, in an effort to increase their winnings.

Another important change results from the fact that online poker rooms, in some cases, offer online poker schools that teach the basics and significantly speed up the learning curve for novices. Many online poker rooms also provide free money play so that players

may practice these skills in various poker games and limits without the risk of losing real money. People who previously had no way to learn and improve because they had no one to play with now have the ability to learn the game much more quickly and gain invaluable experience from free money play.

Tracking play

Tracking poker play in a B&M casino is very difficult. You can easily monitor your winnings, but tracking any detailed statistics about your game requires a player to take notes after each hand, which is cumbersome and distracting.

Conversely, tracking poker play online is easy. Most online poker rooms support "Hand Histories" text files which track every action both you and your opponents made during each hand. The ability to specifically track every single played hand has many advantages. Many third-party software applications process hand history files and return detailed summaries of poker play. These not only include exact tallies of rake and winnings, which are useful for tax purposes, but also offer detailed statistics about the person's poker play. Serious players use these statistics to check for weaknesses or "leaks" (mistakes that leak money from their winnings) in their game. Such detailed analysis of poker play was never available in the past, but with the growth of online poker play, it is now commonplace among nearly all serious and professional online poker players.

Bonuses

While the practice of comping players with free meals, hotel rooms, and merchandise is quite common in B&M casinos, online poker rooms have needed to develop new ways to reward faithful customers. The most common way of doing this is through deposit bonuses, where the player is given a bonus code to enter when placing money into an account. The bonus code adds either a percentage, or a set amount of chips to the value of the deposit. Besides this, several online cardrooms employ VIP Managers to develop VIP programs to reward regular players.

Compatibility

Most online poker rooms offer downloadable Microsoft Windows programs that require an emulator program to run on Apple Macintosh or Linux computers. However, several rooms do have clients that run natively on Mac or Linux.

Online poker portal

An online poker portal is a website offering poker-related content. Examples of such content could be news, tournament results, strategy articles or reviews of online poker cardrooms.

[Home](#) | [Card games](#) | [Poker](#) | [Poker topics](#)

Card games

A **card game** is any game using [playing cards](#), either traditional or game-specific.

The deck or pack

A card game is played with a **deck** (common in the US), or **pack** (common in the UK), of cards intended for that game. The deck consists of a fixed number of pieces of printed cardboard known as *cards*. The cards in a deck are identical in size and shape. Each card has two sides, the *face* and the *back*. The backs of the cards in a deck are indistinguishable. The faces of the cards in a deck may all be unique, or may include duplicates, depending on the game. In either case, any card is readily identifiable by its face. The set of cards that make up the deck are known to all of the players using that deck.

Although many games have special decks of cards, the 52 card pack is known as the standard deck, and is used in a wide variety of games. It consists of 52 cards, each card having a suit (one of spades, hearts, diamonds and clubs) and a rank (a number between 2 and 10, or one of jack, queen, king and ace). For any combination of one suit and one rank, there is exactly one card in the standard deck having that suit and rank. In addition to games that use the standard deck, there are also games that use some modification of the standard deck, for example excluding all cards of rank lower than some rank (e.g., a pinochle deck), or adding a special card, joker, to the standard deck. Many European regions have their own variants of the standard deck having different names and imagery for suits, or having a different set of ranks in the cards.

There are also some card games that require multiple standard decks. In this scenario, a "deck" refers to a set of 52 cards or a single deck, while a "pack" or "shoe" (Blackjack) refers to the collection of "decks" as a whole.

The deal

Dealing is done either clockwise or counterclockwise. If this is omitted from the rules, then it should be assumed to be:

- clockwise for games from North America, North and West Europe and Russia;
- counterclockwise for South and East Europe and Asia, also for Swiss games and all Tarot games.

A player is chosen to deal. That person takes all of the cards in the pack, stacks them together so that they are all the same way up and the same way round, and shuffles them. There are various techniques of shuffling, all intended to put the cards into a random order. During the shuffle, dealer holds the cards so that he or she and the other players cannot see any of their faces.

Shuffling should continue until the chance of a card remaining next to the one that was originally next to is small. In practice, many dealers do not shuffle for long enough to achieve this.

After the shuffle, the dealer offers the deck to another player to *cut the deck*. If the deal is clockwise, this is the player on her right; if counter-clockwise, it is the player on her left.

The invitation to cut is made by placing the pack, face downward, on the table near the player who is to cut: who then lifts the upper portion of the pack clear of the lower portion and places it alongside. The formerly lower portion is then replaced on top of the formerly upper portion.

The dealer then *deals* the cards. This is done by dealer holding the pack, face-down, in one hand, and removing cards from the top of it with her other hand to distribute to the players, placing them face-down on the table in front of the players to whom they are dealt. The rules of the game will specify the details of the deal. It normally starts with the players next to the dealer in the direction of play (left in a clockwise game; right in an anticlockwise one), and continues in the same direction around the table. The cards may be dealt one at a time, or in groups. Unless the rules specify otherwise, assume that the cards are dealt one at a time. Unless the rules specify otherwise, assume that all the cards are dealt out; but in many games, some remain undealt, and are left face down in the middle of the table, forming the talon, skat, or stock. The player who received the first card from the deal may be known as eldest hand, or as forehand.

The set of cards dealt to a player is known as his or her *hand*.

Throughout the shuffle, cut, and deal, the dealer should arrange that the players are unable to see the faces of any of the cards. The players should not try to see any of the faces. Should a card accidentally become exposed (visible to all), then normally any player can demand a redeal - that is, all the cards are gathered up, and the shuffle, cut and deal are repeated. Should a player accidentally see a card (other than one dealt to herself) she should admit this.

It is dishonest to try to see cards as they are dealt, or to take advantage of having seen a card accidentally.

When the deal is complete, all players pick up their cards and hold them in such a way that the faces can be seen by the holder of the cards but not the other players. It is helpful to fan one's cards out so that (if they have corner indices) all their values can be seen at once. In most games it is also useful to sort one's hand, rearranging the cards in a way appropriate to the game. For example in a trick taking game it is easier to have all one's cards of the same suit together, whereas in a rummy game one might sort them by rank or by potential combinations.

The rules

A new card game starts in a small way, either as someone's invention, or as a modification of an existing game. Those playing it may agree to change the rules as they wish. The rules that they agree on become the "house rules" under which they play the game. A set of house rules may be accepted as valid by a group of players wherever they play. It may also be accepted as governing all play within a particular house, café, or club.

When a game becomes sufficiently popular, so that people often play it with strangers, there is a need for a generally accepted set of rules. This is often met by a particular set of house rules becoming generally recognised. For example, when whist became popular in 18th-century England, players in the Portland Club agreed on a set of house rules for use on its premises. Players in some other clubs then agreed to follow the "Portland Club" rules,

rather than go to the trouble of codifying and printing their own sets of rules. The Portland Club rules eventually became generally accepted throughout England.

There is nothing "official" about this process. If you decide to play whist seriously, it would be sensible to learn the Portland Club rules, so that you can play with other people who already know these rules. But if you only play whist with your family, you are likely to ignore these rules, and just use what rules you choose. And if you play whist seriously with a group of friends, you are still perfectly free to devise your own set of rules, should you want to.

It is sometimes said that the "official" or "correct" sets of rules governing a card game are those "in Hoyle". Edmond Hoyle was an 18th-century Englishman who published a number of books about card games. His books were popular, especially his treatise on how to become a good whist player. After (and even before) his death, many publishers have taken advantage of his popularity by placing his name on their books of rules. The presence of his name on a rule book has no significance at all. The rules given in the book may be no more than the opinion of the author.

If there is a sense in which a card game can have an "official" set of rules, it is when that card game has an "official" governing body. For example, the rules of tournament bridge are governed by the World Bridge Federation, and by local bodies in various countries such as the ACBL in the USA, and the EBU in England. The rules of skat in Germany are governed by the Deutsche Skatverband which publishes the *Skatordnung*. The rules of French tarot are governed by the Fédération Française de Tarot. But there is no compulsion to follow the rules put out by these organisations. If you and your friends decide to play a game by a set of rules unknown to the game's official body, you are doing nothing illegal.

Many widely-played card games have no official regulating body. An example is Canasta.

Rule infractions

An infraction is any action which is against the rules of the game, such as playing a card when it is not one's turn to play and the accidental exposure of a card.

In many official sets of rules for card games, the rules specifying the penalties for various infractions occupy more pages than the rules specifying how to play correctly. This is tedious, but necessary for games that are played seriously. Players who intend to play a card game at a high level generally ensure before beginning that all agree on the penalties to be used. When playing privately, this will normally be a question of agreeing house rules. In a tournament there will probably be a tournament director who will enforce the rules when required and arbitrate in cases of doubt.

If a player breaks the rules of a game deliberately, this is cheating. Most card players would refuse to play cards with a known cheat. The rest of this section is therefore about accidental infractions, caused by ignorance, clumsiness, inattention, etc.

As the same game is played repeatedly among a group of players, precedents build up about how a particular infraction of the rules should be handled. E.G. "Sheila just led a card when it wasn't her turn. Last week when Jo did that, we agreed ... etc.". Sets of such precedents tend to become established among groups of players, and to be regarded as part of the house rules. Sets of house rules become formalised, as described in the previous

section. Therefore, for some games, there is a "proper" way of handling infractions of the rules. But for many games, without governing bodies, there is no standard way of handling infractions.

In many circumstances, there is no need for special rules dealing with what happens after an infraction. As a general principle, the person who broke a rule should not benefit by it, and the other players should not lose by it. An exception to this may be made in games with fixed partnerships, in which it may be felt that the partner(s) of the person who broke a rule should also not benefit. The penalty for an accidental infraction should be as mild as reasonable, consistent with there being no possible benefit to the person responsible.

Types of card games

Trick-taking games

- 500
Barbu
- Bridge
- Écarté
Euchre
Hearts
Hokm
Oh Hell
Pinochle
- Piquet
- ROOK
- Sheepshead
- Skat
Spades
Sixty-three
Sueca (game)
Whist
Wizard

Rummy-style games

- 500 Rum
Canasta
Concentration
Conquian - the fore-runner of modern rummy games, sometimes called Cooncan.
Desmoche
Five Crowns
Gin rummy

Go Fish
Haihowak
Happy Families
Kemps
Phase 10
Robbers' rummy
Rummy
Seven Bridge
Shanghai rum
Spoons
Steal the old man's pack
Tonk
Tri
Wyatt Earp

Casino or gambling card games

- [3-card poker](#)
- Baccarat
 - Bingo
 - Blackjack
 - Blind Hookey
 - Bourré
- [Caribbean stud poker](#)
- Casino war
 - Cribbage
- [Poker](#)
- Primero
- [Red dog](#)
- Thirty-one
- [Three card brag](#)

Solitaire (or *Patience*) games

- Ace of the Pile
 - Baker's Dozen (solitaire)
 - Calculation
 - Concentration
 - FreeCell
 - Kings in the Corner (multi-player)
 - Klondike
 - Nertz (multiplayer)
 - Russian Bank
 - Solitaire Showdown

Shedding games

- Bartok / Bartog
Big Two
Bullshit
California Speed
Chase the Ace/Old Maid
Craits
Crazy Eights
Durak
Eleusis
Mao
President
Q Squared Joe or Q2J
Shichi Narabe
Shithead
Spit / Speed
Spite and Malice
Tien len
UNO

Accumulating games

- Beggar-My-Neighbour
Egyptian Ratscrew
Ratsgroup
Screw Your Neighbor
Seven Spades
Slapjack
Snap
Top Trumps
War

Fishing Games

- Cassino
Pasur

Multi-genre games

- Eleusis
Poke
Skitgubbe

Tichu
Tripoli

Collectible card games (CCG's)

- Duel Masters
Magic: The Gathering
Pokémon
Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game
Harry Potter Trading Card Game
QuickStrike
AVATAR

Other card games

- 1000 Blank White Cards
Blitz
Bohnanza
Chez Geek
Chrononauts
Flinch
Fluxx
GOLF
Gother Than Thou
Grass
Hanafuda
Illuminati
Karuta
Obake karuta
LeCardo
Lost Cities
Lucky Seven
Mille Bournes
Munchkin
Mus
Numero
Pens
Pit
Pits
San Juan (game)
Scopa
Scopone
Set
Sevens

Sheepshead
Strat-o-Matic Series

Fictional card games

- Cripple Mr Onion - from the Discworld book series
- Diamondback - from the Cerebus comics
- Double Fanucci - from the Zork series
- Dragon Poker - from the MythAdventures novels
- Fizzbin - from the original Star Trek
- Pazaak - from the Knights of the Old Republic video game
- Pyramid - from the Battlestar Galactica series
- Sabacc - from the Star Wars universe
- Tall Card - from the Firefly television series
- Exploding Snap - from the Harry Potter book series
- Montana Red Dog - from the TV series Alias Smith and Jones
- Watch Me - from the Dark Tower book series
- Triple Triad- from the Final Fantasy VIII video game
- Tetra Master - from the Final Fantasy IX video game
- Sphere Break - from the Final Fantasy X-2 video game
- Chop - from the Wheel of Time literary series

Pranks

- 52 Pickup

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker

Poker is a [card game](#), the most popular of a class of games called *vying games*, in which players with fully or partially concealed cards make wagers into a central *pot*, which is awarded to the player or players with the best combination of cards or to the player who makes an uncalled bet. Poker can also refer to video poker, a single-player game seen in casinos much like a slot machine, or to other games that use poker hand rankings.

Game play

Poker is played in hundreds of [variations](#), but most follow the same basic pattern of play.

The right to deal each hand typically rotates among the players and is marked by a token called a [button or buck](#). In a casino a house dealer handles the cards for each hand,

but a button (typically a white plastic disk) is rotated among the players to indicate a nominal dealer to determine the order of betting.

For each hand, one or more players are required to make [forced bets](#) to create an initial stake for which the players will contest. The dealer shuffles the cards, he or another player cuts, and the appropriate number of cards are dealt to the players one at a time. After the initial deal, the first of what may be several [betting](#) rounds begins. Between rounds, the players' hands develop in some way, often by being dealt additional cards or replacing cards previously dealt. At the end of each round, all bets are gathered into the central pot.

At any time during a betting round, if a player makes a bet, opponents are required to match it or to surrender their cards and forfeit their interest in the pot. If one player bets and no opponents choose to match the bet, the deal ends immediately, the bettor is awarded the pot, no cards are required to be shown, and the next deal begins. The ability to win a pot without showing a hand makes [bluffing](#) possible. Bluffing is a primary feature of poker, one that distinguishes it from other vying games and from other games that make use of poker hand rankings.

At the end of the last betting round, if more than one player remains, there is a [showdown](#), in which the players reveal their previously hidden cards and evaluate their [hands](#). The player with the best hand according to the poker variant being played wins the pot.

Most popular poker variants can be loosely classified as [draw poker](#), [stud poker](#), or [community card poker](#); miscellaneous poker games exist. The most commonly played games in these categories are [five-card draw](#), [seven-card stud](#), and [Texas hold 'em](#), respectively.

See the article on [betting](#) for detailed rules regarding forced bets, betting actions, limits, stakes, and all-in situations.

See the articles on [poker variants](#) and [hand rankings](#) for details about the order of play and hand rankings for the most common poker variants.

History

The history of poker is a matter of some debate. The name of the game likely descended from the French poque, which descended from the German pochen ('to knock'), but it is not clear whether the origins of poker itself lie with the games bearing those names. It closely resembles the Persian game of as nas, and may have been taught to French settlers in New Orleans by Persian sailors. It is commonly regarded as sharing ancestry with the Renaissance game of primero and the French brelan. The English game brag (earlier bragg) clearly descended from *brelan* and incorporated bluffing (though the concept was known in other games by that time). It is quite possible that all of these earlier games influenced the development of poker as it exists now.

English actor Joseph Crowell reported that the game was played in New Orleans in 1829, with a deck of 20 cards, four players betting on which player's hand was the most valuable. Jonathan H. Green's book, *An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling* (G. B. Zieber, Philadelphia, 1843), described the spread of the game from there to the rest of the country by Mississippi riverboats, on which gambling was a common pastime. As it spread

up the Mississippi and West during the gold rush, it is thought to have become a part of the frontier, pioneering ethos.

Soon after this spread, the full 52-card English deck was used, and the [flush](#) was introduced. During the American Civil War, many additions were made, including [draw poker](#), [stud poker](#) (the five-card variant), and the [straight](#). Further American developments followed, such as the [wild card](#) (around 1875), [lowball](#) and [split-pot poker](#) (around 1900), and [community card poker](#) games (around 1925). Spread of the game to other countries, particularly in Asia, is often attributed to the U.S. military.

The game and [jargon](#) of poker have become important parts of American culture and English culture. Such phrases as *ace in the hole*, *ace up one's sleeve*, *beats me*, *blue chip*, *call one's bluff*, *cash in*, *high roller*, [pass the buck](#), *poker face*, *stack up*, *up the ante*, *when the chips are down*, [wild card](#), and others are used in everyday conversation, even by those unaware of their origins at the poker table.

Modern [tournament](#) play became popular in American casinos after the [World Series of Poker](#) began, in 1970. Notable champions from these early WSOP tournaments include Johnny Moss, Amarillo Slim, and Doyle Brunson. It was also during that decade that the first serious strategy books appeared, notably *Super/System* by Doyle Brunson (ISBN 1580420818) and *The Book of Tells* by Mike Caro (ISBN 0897461002), followed later by *The Theory of Poker* by David Sklansky (ISBN 1880685000).

Poker's popularity experienced an unprecedented spike in the first years of the twenty-first century, largely because of the introduction of [online poker](#) and the invention of the hole-card camera, which turned the game into a spectator sport. Viewers could now follow the action and drama of the game, and broadcasts of poker tournaments such as the [World Series of Poker](#) and the World Poker Tour brought in huge audiences for cable and satellite TV distributors. Because of the increasing coverage of poker events, poker pros are becoming more and more like celebrities, with poker fans all over the world entering into expensive tournaments for the chance to play with them. This increased camera exposure also brings about a new dimension to the poker pro's game—the realization that their actions may be aired later on TV.

Major poker tournament fields have grown dramatically because of the growing popularity of online [satellite](#)-qualifier tournaments where the prize is an entry into a major tournament. The 2003 and 2004 WSOP champions, Chris Moneymaker and Greg Raymer, respectively, won their seats to the main event by winning online satellites.

Quotations

Poker is a microcosm of all we admire and disdain about capitalism and democracy. It can be rough-hewn or polished, warm or cold, charitable and caring or hard and impersonal. It is fickle and elusive, but ultimately it is fair, and right, and just.—Lou Krieger

If you can't spot the sucker within the first half hour at the table, then you are the sucker.—common poker saying, as spoken by Matt Damon in *Rounders*; originally attributed to Amarillo Slim

Whether he likes it or not, a man's character is stripped bare at the poker table; if the other players read him better than he does, he has only himself to blame. Unless he is both

able and prepared to see himself as others do, flaws and all, he will be a loser in cards, as in life.—Anthony Holden (from *Big Deal*)

There are few things that are so unpardonably neglected in our country as poker... Why, I have known clergymen, good men, kindhearted, liberal, sincere, and all that, who did not know the meaning of a 'flush'. It is enough to make one ashamed of one's species.—Mark Twain

Nobody is always a winner, and anybody who says he is, is either a liar or doesn't play poker.—Amarillo Slim

They anticipate losing when they sit down and I try my darnedest not to disappoint one of them.—Amarillo Slim

Poker is a game of people. . . . It's not the hand I hold, it's the people that I play with.—Amarillo Slim

[Hold-'em](#) is to [stud](#) what chess is to checkers.—Johnny Moss

The guy who invented poker was bright, but the guy who invented the chip was a genius.—Julius Weintraub, a.k.a. "Big Julie"

Poker is the game closest to the western conception of life, where life and thought are recognized as intimately combined, where free will prevails over philosophies of fate or of chance, where men are considered moral agents and where - at least in the short run - the important thing is not what happens but what people think happens.—John Lukacs

Last night I stayed up late playing poker with Tarot cards. I got a [full house](#) and four people died.—Steven Wright

Cards are war, in disguise of a sport.—Charles Lamb, *Essays of Elia* (1832)

Poker is a godless game, full of random pain.—Andy Bloch

You call this one and it's all over, baby.—Scotty Nguyen, during the 1998 World Series of Poker. Down to him and one other player, he said this to his opponent who called, and it was all over.

Luck favours the backbone, not the wishbone.—Doyle Brunson

Mae West: Is poker a game of chance? W.C. Fields: Not the way I play it.—My Little Chickadee

Yeah, well, sometimes nothing can be a real cool hand.—Cool Hand Luke, showing his stone-cold bluff after winning a 5-card stud pot [listen](#)

The game exemplifies the worst aspects of capitalism that have made our country so great.—Walter Matthau

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[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker topics

List of poker-related topics

See main article at [poker](#).

- Rules of the game
 - [Hands](#) and [rank of hands](#)
 - [Betting structure](#)
 - [Variants](#)
 - [Draw poker](#) (including [five-card draw](#))
 - [Stud poker](#) (including [five-card stud](#) and [seven-card stud](#))
 - [Community card poker](#) (including [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold'em](#))
 - [Casino games](#) with poker-like rules (including [Caribbean stud](#) and [Pai Gow poker](#))
 - [Three-card poker](#) including (including [three card brag](#))
 - [Chinese poker](#)
 - [Non-standard poker hands](#)
 - [Public cardroom rules](#)
 - [Cheating](#)
- [Poker strategy](#)
 - [Fundamental theorem of poker](#)
 - [Morton's theorem](#)
 - [Pot odds](#)
 - [Poker plays](#)
 - [Aggressive plays](#)
 - [Bluffing plays](#)
 - [Check-raise plays](#)
 - [Defense plays](#)
 - [Drawing plays](#)
 - [Isolation plays](#)
 - [Position plays](#)
 - [Protection plays](#)
 - [Slow plays](#)
 - [Stealing plays](#)
 - [Poker probability](#)
 - [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#)
 - [Psychology](#) and [tells](#)
 - [Other gameplay and strategy](#)
- [Tournaments](#)
 - [World Series of Poker](#)
 - [World Poker Tour](#)
 - [Other notable tournaments](#)
- [Online poker](#)
- [Poker jargon](#)
 - [List of slang names for poker hands](#)

- Poker companies
- [Poker television programs](#)

Poker-related games include non-poker vying games commonly played along with poker such as Seven twenty-seven and Bourré, and unrelated games that use poker hands in various ways such as Liar's poker.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker rules

[Home](#) | [Poker hands](#) | [Betting structure](#) | [Poker variants](#) | [Public cardroom rules](#) | [Cheating in poker](#) | [Rule variations](#)

Poker hands

A **hand** in [poker](#) can mean any of the following:

1. A unit of play consisting of a deal, one or more rounds of betting, and possibly a showdown.
2. A set of five cards with a certain value. For example, the hand **AH 10H 9H 5H 3H** is a "flush", a hand that is valuable because each card is of the same suit.
3. A player's set of non-communal cards.

The second and third definitions are often used interchangeably. For example, in [Texas hold 'em](#), a player holding **AC KS**, with a board of **AH KC KD 7S 3D**, might say, "my hand is ace-king". However, his best 5-card hand (the portion of the hand which determines value) is the kings-over-aces full house.

General rules

The following general rules apply to evaluating poker hands, whatever set of hand values are used.

- Individual cards are ranked **A** (high), **K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2** (low).

Individual card ranks are often used to evaluate hands that contain no pairs or other special combinations, or to rank the kickers of otherwise equal hands. The Ace is ranked low in ace-to-five and ace-to-six lowball games.

- Suits have no value.

The suits of the cards are mainly used in determining whether a hand fits a certain category (specifically the [Flush](#) and [Straight flush](#) hands). In most variants, if two players have hands that are identical except for suit, then they are tied and split the pot. Sometimes a ranking called [high card by suit](#) is used for randomly selecting a player to deal.

- A hand always consists of five cards.

In games where more than five cards are available to each player, hands are ranked by choosing some five-card subset according to the rules of the game, and comparing that five-card hand against the five-card hands of the other players. Whatever cards remain after choosing the five to be played are of no consequence in determining the winner. (For example, when comparing identical full houses, there are no "kickers".)

- Hands are ranked first by category, then by individual card ranks.

That is, even the minimum qualifying hand in a certain category defeats all hands in all lower categories. The smallest [Two pair](#) hand, for example, defeats all hands with just [One pair](#) or [No pair](#). Only between two hands in the same category are card ranks used

to break ties. The highest single card in each flush or straight is used to break ties (the Ace-through-five straight is the lowest straight, the Ace being a low card in this context). Within two [Two pair](#) hands, the higher pairs are first compared. If they tie, then the secondary pairs are compared, and then finally the kicker.

- For ease of explanation, hands are shown here neatly arranged, but a poker hand has the same value no matter what order the cards are received in.

Ranking of hands

The standard [ranking of poker hands](#) are:

- Royal flush: Five cards in sequence and of the same suit, starting from the Ace down to the 10. *Example: AS KS QS JS 10S* (Note: A Royal Flush is not a category of hand in and of itself, it is simply the highest-valued straight flush, and thus also the highest-valued hand. Since it is mentioned often in the context of hand rankings, it is worth noting in this list.)
- Straight flush: Any five cards in sequence and of the same suit. *Example: QD JD 10D 9D 8D*
- Four of a kind: A hand with four cards of the same rank. *Example: 4C 4D 4H 4S 9H*
- Full house: A hand with three cards of one rank and two of another. *Example: 8C 8D 8S KH KS* (Often described as the three-of-a-kind rank *full of* the pair rank. The example is *eights full of kings*)
- Flush: Five cards of the same suit. *Example: KS JS 8S 4S 3S*
- Straight: Five cards in sequence. (The ace can be considered higher than the king or lower than the two.) *Example: 5D 4H 3S 2D AD*
- Three of a kind: Three cards of the same rank. *Example: 7C 7H 7S KD 2S*
- Two pair: Two cards of one rank, two of another. *Example: AC AD 8H 8S QS*
- One pair: Two cards of the same rank. *Example: 9H 9S AC JS 4H*
- High card: Also known as a "no pair" hand. The following example is considered "Ace high." *Example: AD 10D 9S 5C 4C*

The hands are ranked in this order because of their relative probabilities, with rarer hands ranking above more common hands. See also [Poker probability](#). In addition, all 5 card poker hands can be collapsed down to 7,462 distinct equivalence classes. For example, there are 24 different ways to create an Aces over Kings Full House hand, but since they all hold the same poker ranking value, they can be collapsed into the same equivalence class. In this way, all 2,598,960 unique five card poker hands can be shrunk down to just 7,462 distinct classes of hands.

Variations

Some games called [lowball](#) or **low poker** are played where players strive not for the highest ranking of the above combinations but for the lowest ranking hand. There are three methods of ranking low hands, called [Ace-to-five low](#), [Deuce-to-seven low](#), and [Ace-to-six low](#). The **ace-to-five** method is most common. A sub-variant within this category is **high-**

low poker, in which the highest and lowest hands split the pot (with the highest hand taking any odd chips if the pot does not divide equally). Sometimes straights and/or flushes count in determining which hand is highest but not in determining which hand is lowest (being reckoned as a no-pair hand in the latter instance), so that a player with such a holding can win both ways and thus take the entire pot.

Certain variants use hands of only three cards, either high or low. Three-card low hands can be ranked by any of the three methods above, although with three cards they become **ace-to-three** (rather than ace-to-five), **deuce-to-five**, and **ace-to-four**. The ace-to-three method is the most common, just as the ace-to-five method is most common method for five cards. Three-card high hands are ranked in one of two ways: either with or without straights and flushes. Without them (which is the most common, and used such games as [Chinese poker](#)), the hands are simply **no pair**, **one pair**, and **three of a kind**. If you add straights and flushes, the order of hands should be changed to reflect the correct probabilities: **no pair**, **one pair**, **flush**, **straight**, **three of a kind**, **straight flush**. This order is used, for example, in Mambo stud.

Some poker games are played with a deck that has been [stripped](#) of certain cards, usually low-ranking ones. For example, the Australian game of Manila uses a 32-card deck in which all cards below the rank of 7 are removed, and Mexican stud removes the **8s**, **9s**, and **10s**. In both of these games, a flush ranks above a full house, because having fewer cards of each suit available makes flushes rarer.

Some games add one or more [non-standard poker hands](#), [bugs](#), [wild cards](#), or have other exceptions to the standard rules above. For example, in the game of [Pai gow poker](#) as played in Nevada, a *wheel* (**5-4-3-2-A**) ranks above a king-high straight, but below an ace-high straight.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Dead man's hand](#) | [Dominating hand](#) | [Drawing hand](#) | [Made hand](#) | [Nut hand](#) | [Pocket Aces](#) | [Starting hand](#) | [Non-standard poker hand](#) | [Rank of hands](#)

Dead man's hand

In [poker](#), the **dead man's hand** is a [two-pair hand](#), namely "aces and eights." The origin of the name is the [five-card-draw](#) hand held by Wild Bill Hickok at the time of his murder, which is accepted to have included the aces and eights of both of the black suits (sometimes considered "bullets").

There are various claims as to the identity of Hickok's fifth card, and there is also some reason to believe that he had discarded one card, the [draw](#) was interrupted by the shooting, and he never got the fifth card due to him.

The Stardust in Las Vegas had a 5 of diamonds on display as the 5th card; in the HBO television series Deadwood, a 9 of diamonds is used; the modern town of Deadwood, South Dakota also uses the 9 of diamonds in displays; and Ripley's Believe it or Not shows a queen of clubs.

For other poker hands that have found a place in lore, see [List of slang names for poker hands](#).

The hand in popular culture

This ominous hand is sometimes used as a portent of death in songs, books and in movies that include

Stagecoach (where a doomed character held the ace of diamonds in place of one black ace, and the queen of hearts as fifth card)

The Plainsman (where Gary Cooper as Hickok held the king of spades as the fifth card)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (in Ken Kesey's novel McMurphy has a dead man's hands tattoo)

The collectible card game Doomtown defines a Dead Man's Hand as having the Jack of Diamonds as the fifth card. In this game, it is considered to outrank any other poker hand, unless an opponent plays the card "That's Two Pair!" to reduce its rank.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, and

Dick Tracy

Along Came a Spider

A Party Poker ad shows a man playing poker against an opponent holding a dead man's hand with a Five of Diamonds as the fifth card. The camera then pans out to show that the setting is a morgue and the player holding the dead man's hand is a corpse

Dead Man's Hand is the name of a first-person shooter for the Xbox set in the Old West, which features train trips and shoot-outs on horseback.

[Dead Man's Hand](#) Popular Rockabilly band which originated in Jacksonville, FL and later relocated to Los Angeles known for their blues-rich sound and driving rhythm. Their 1999 full length album, Days You Loved Me, won much acclaim amongst critics and roots music enthusiasts alike.

Bob Dylan's 1962 song "Rambling Gambling Willie" shows the tradition in these lines:

It was late one evenin' during a poker game.

A man lost all his money; he said Willie was to blame.

He shot poor Willie through the head, which was a tragic fate.

When Willie's cards fell on the floor, they were aces backed with eights.

And, in the next verse:

So all you rovin' gamblers, wherever you might be,

The moral of this story is very plain to see.

Make your money while you can, before you have to stop,

For when you pull that dead man's hand, your gamblin' days are up.

Bob Seger's 1980 song "Fire Lake" make reference to the legend in these lines:

Who wants to play those eights and aces

Who wants a raise

Who needs a stake

Who wants to take that long shot gamble

And head out to fire lake

Motörhead mentions the hand in their 1980 song Ace of Spades in the final verse:

Pushing up the ante, I know you've got to see me,

Read 'em and weep, the Dead Man's Hand again,

I see it in your eyes, take one look and die,

The only thing you see, you know it's gonna be,
The Ace Of Spades

Uncle Kracker has based an entire song on the hand, entitled Aces and Eights, where in the refrain, he repeats the lines:

Aces and eights, aces and eights, aces and eights

That's a dead man's hand

In Nelson DeMille's novel *The Charm School*, the school in question is a Soviet prison camp for American military personnel missing in action forced to serve as role models for future spies, who live with them in a complete simulation of American everyday culture. The prisoners have secretly agreed among themselves on false customs they will teach in order to sabotage their students' future missions, and DeMille reveals this fact to the reader by describing a poker game where a two-pair hand has just been declared, and a prisoner misleads a student by inappropriately describing it as the dead man's hand.

Adapting to 7-card games

In five-card games, this category of hands can be succinctly defined as two aces, two eights, and one card of any remaining rank, regardless of suit. In seven-card games, a strict specification of aces and eights is more complicated: in permitting the existence of two pairs, a five-card hand as described also rules out any higher value. Among seven-card hands, as a contrasting example, any with two aces, two eights, and three cards with one other rank in common always provides both two pair and a [full house](#), so a competent player would always set aside the eights and declare the full house; most players would probably thus not consider it a dead man's hand, any more than they would so consider a *full house* with aces and eights.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Dominating hand

In [poker](#), a **dominating** hand is one with an overwhelming statistical advantage over another specific hand. For example, in [Seven-card stud](#), while a [Starting hand](#) of **KS KH QD** has the lead over **AD KD 10H**, the latter has many [outs](#) (ways to improve) to beat the former (catching an ace, the straight, the flush, etc.), making it a roughly even contest. However, the first hand dominates in a contest with a hand like **QH QS JC**, because this hand has no ways to improve that the first one doesn't also have (two pair, trips, straight), and the first hand has some of the second hand's outs as well (unseen cards include two kings, but only one queen), giving it a significant advantage.

This concept is most important in no limit play, where it is possible to bet all your money early in the hand. One must judge not only whether your opponent's hand might be better than yours, but whether or not it might dominate yours to such a degree that long-run fluctuations of luck will amplify the consequences of a mistaken play rather than mitigating them.

One of the things that makes no limit [Texas hold 'em](#) strategically rich and interesting is the unusual relationship of advantage and dominance among various [Starting hands](#). For example, the hand **AC KD** is a slight favorite over **JS 10S**; this hand is a slight favorite over **4S 4C**; and in a non-transitive relationship, the fours are a small favorite over **AC KD**. None of these hands dominates any other, but **AC KD** *does* dominate **AH QD**, **4S 4C** is dominated by **7S 7H**, and **JS 10S** is dominated by **QC JC**.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Drawing hand

In [Poker](#), a **drawing hand** is a hand that is not yet "complete"; that is, one which does not yet rank highly, but which may later, depending on what cards a player receives. This contrasts with a [made hand](#) - a hand which is already somewhat strong.

An illustrative example from [Texas Hold 'em](#): if Alice holds **AC KC**, Bob holds **6D 7D**, and the flop comes **5S 8S KH**, then Alice has a fairly strong "made hand" (a pair of Kings, with an Ace kicker), while Bob has a drawing hand: an open-ended straight draw. If allowed to see the final two community cards, Bob can expect to catch a **4** or a **9** (thus completing his [straight](#) and winning) about a third of the time.

Whether to continue with a drawing hand is usually a function of [pot odds](#). Typically, if a player with a strong "made hand" suspects another player of being "on a draw", the player with the made hand will make a strong bet, so that it is mathematically incorrect for the other player to "chase".

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Made hand

In [poker](#), a **made hand** is one that does not need improvement to win, in contrast to a [drawing](#) hand. For example in [Draw poker](#), if you have two pair, and your opponent is drawing for a straight or flush, you are said to have a made hand because even though you will be drawing a card just as he will, you can win even if you don't draw a card that improves your hand, while he cannot win unless he improves

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Nut hand

In [poker](#), the **nut hand**, or just the **nuts**, is the strongest hand possible in any particular situation. The term applies mostly to [community card poker](#) games to mean the individual

holding that makes the strongest hand possible with the given board of community cards. By extension, the term is used more loosely to refer to any very strong hand.

For example in [Texas hold 'em](#), if the board is **5S 6S AC 9S 5H**, a player holding **7S 8S** has the nuts (a 9-high straight flush in spades), and cannot lose. Sometimes it is useful to know that your hand is the second or third best possible. On this same board, the hand **5C 5D** would be the second-nut hand, four fives; and the third-nut hand would be any pair of the remaining three aces, making a full house **A-A-A-5-5**.

In [high-low split](#) games one often speaks of "nut low" and "nut high" hands separately. With an [Omaha](#) board identical to the one above, any hand with **2-3** makes the nut low **6-5-3-2-A**, while **2-4** is the second-nut low (the nut high hands remain the same).

Finally, one also hears terms such as "nut flush" or "nut full house" to mean the highest hand possible in that particular category in the circumstances, even though that may not be strictly the nut hand. For example, a pair of aces with the above board could be called the "nut full house", even though there are two higher (but very unlikely) hands possible.

The phrase originates from the historical poker games in the colonial west of America. If one bet to the sum of everything he possessed, he would place the "nuts" of his wagon wheels on the table. Most likely, this was to ensure that, should the wagerer lose the hand, he would be unable to flee and would have to make good on the bet. Obviously, to make such a bet one would need to be sure that he has the best possible hand.

There is also a possibility of having a nut losing hand (a hand that will lose to anything). For example, this occurs when the board has four of a kind and a deuce. In this situation, if you hold pocket 2's, there is no possibility of this hand winning a showdown with any other hand, as any opponent must have a better kicker than you.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Pocket Aces

Pocket Aces refers to a starting [poker](#) hand that contains two Aces. The most common context is a game of [Texas Hold'em](#).

Other names for Ace-Ace include *American Airlines*, *bullets*, and *rockets*.

In a conventional game of hold'em, Ace-Ace is the best possible starting hand. It is the best hand before the flop, is the hand most likely to form the best hand after the flop, and in the long run shows the most earning potential of any starting hand. The second-best starting hand is King-King.

It is also possible to have pocket aces in a game of seven-card stud, if the two [hole cards](#) are aces.

The odds against being dealt pocket aces are 220:1.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Starting hand

In [poker](#), the **starting hand** is the initial set of cards dealt to each player before any voluntary betting takes place. For example, in [Seven-card stud](#) this is two downcards and one upcard; in [Texas hold'em](#) it is two downcards; in [Five-card draw](#) it is five cards.

The one decision made by every poker player on every deal of every game is whether to continue playing that hand after seeing that first set of cards. Since making this decision correctly will lead to the most long-run profit for a skilled player, players often put considerable study into what the appropriate starting hand "standards" are for the game being played.

Optimal starting hand standards can be very sensitive to factors such as the [betting structure](#) of a game, [position](#), and the character of the other players, as well as the rules of the game being played.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Non-standard poker hand

Non-standard poker hands are hands which are not recognized by official [poker](#) rules but are created by house rules. Non-standard hands usually appear in games using [wild cards](#) or [bugs](#). Other terms for nonstandard hands are **special hands** or **freak hands**. Because the hands are defined by house rules, the composition and ranking of these hands is subject to variation. Any player participating in a game with non-standard hands should be sure to determine the exact rules of the game before play begins.

The usual hierarchy of poker hands from highest to lowest runs as follows (standard poker hands are in *italics*):

- **Five of a kind**: Five cards of the same rank, only possible using one or more wild cards.
- **Skeet flush**: The same cards as a skeet and all in the same suit.
- *Straight flush*: The highest straight flush, A-K-Q-J-10 suited, is also called a *royal flush*.
- *Four of a kind*: Between two equal sets of four of a kind (possible in [wild card](#) and [community card poker](#) games), the kicker determines the winner.
- **Big bobtail**: A four card straight flush (four cards of the same suit in consecutive order).
- *Full house*
- *Flush*: When [wild cards](#) are used, a wild card contained in a flush is considered to be of the highest rank not already present in the hand. For example, in the hand **(Wild) 10H 8H 5H 4H**, the wild card plays as the **AH**, but in the hand **AC KC (Wild) 9C 6C**, it plays as the **QC**. A variation is the *double-ace flush rule*, in which a wild card in a flush always plays as an ace, even if one is already present. In such a game, the hand **AS (Wild) 9S 5S 2S** would defeat **AD KD QD 10D 8D** (the wild card playing as an imaginary second **AS**), whereas by the

standard rules it would lose (because even with the wild card playing as a **KS**, the latter hand's **QD** outranks the former's **9S**).

- **Big cat:** See cats and dogs below.
- **Little cat:** See cats and dogs below.
- **Big dog:** See cats and dogs below.
- **Little dog:** See cats and dogs below.
- **Straight:** When [wild cards](#) are used, the wild card becomes whichever rank is necessary to complete the straight. If two different ranks would complete a straight, it becomes the higher. For example, in the hand **JD 10S 9C (Wild) 7S**, the wild card plays as an **8** (of any suit; it doesn't matter). In the hand **(Wild) 6H 5D 4H 3D**, it plays as a **7** (even though a **2** would also make a straight).
- **Wheel:** The sequence 5-4-3-2-A. This could technically be considered a round-the-corner straight, but is frequently played even if other round-the-corner straights are not allowed, particularly in [pai gow poker](#). When wheels are recognized as distinct from round-the-corner straights, they are ranked as straights: in most games they are considered five-high, and thus the lowest possible straights, but in pai gow poker they rank between king-high and ace-high straights.
- **Wrap-around straight:** Also called **round-the-corner straight**. Consecutive cards including an ace which counts as both the high and low card. (Example Q-K-A-2-3).
- **Skip straight:** Also called **alternate straight**, **Dutch straight**, or **skipper**. Cards are in consecutive order, skipping every other card. (Example 3-5-7-9-J).
- **Five and dime:** All cards are fives, sixes, sevens, eights, nines, or tens with no pair.
- **Skeet:** Also called **pelter** or **bracket**. A hand with a deuce; a three or a four; a five; a six, a seven, or an eight; and a nine.
- *Three of a kind*
- **Little bobtail:** A three card straight flush (three cards of the same suit in consecutive order).
- **Flash:** One card of each suit plus a joker.
- **Blaze:** Also called **blazer**. All cards are jacks, queens, or kings.
- *Two pair*
- **Russ:** Five cards of the same color.
- **Bobtail flush:** Also called **four flush**. Four cards of the same suit.
- **Flush house:** Three cards of one suit and two cards of another.
- **Bobtail straight:** Also called **four straight**. Four cards in consecutive order.
- *One pair*
- *High card*

Some poker games are played with a deck that has been [stripped](#) of certain cards, usually low-ranking ones. For example, the Australian game of Manila uses a 32-card deck in which all cards below the rank of 7 are removed, and Mexican stud removes the **8s**, **9s**, and **10s**. In both of these games, a flush ranks above a full house, because having fewer cards of each suit available makes full houses more common.

Cats and dogs

"Cats" (or "tigers") and "dogs" are types of no-pair hands defined by their highest and lowest cards. The remaining three cards are kickers. Dogs and cats rank above straights and below flushes. Usually, when cats and dogs are played, they are the only unconventional hands allowed.

- **Little dog:** Seven high, two low (for example, 7-6-4-3-2). It ranks just above a straight, and below a flush or any other cat or dog.
- **Big dog:** Ace high, nine low (for example, A-K-J-10-9). Ranks above a straight or little dog, and below a flush or cat.
- **Little cat (or little tiger):** Eight high, three low. Ranks above a straight or any dog, but below a flush or big cat.
- **Big cat (or big tiger):** King high, eight low. It ranks just below a flush, and above a straight or any other cat or dog.

Some play that dog or cat flushes beat a straight flush, under the reasoning that a plain dog or cat beats a plain straight. This makes the big cat flush the highest hand in the game.

Kilters

A **Kilter**, also called **Kelter**, is a generic term for a number of different non-standard hands. Depending on house rules, a Kilter may be a Skeet, a Little Cat, a Skip Straight, or some variation of one of these hands.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Rank of hands

See the article on [non-standard poker hands](#) for more information about non-standard poker hands, including the use of [wild cards](#) and [bugs](#).

In [poker](#), certain combinations of cards, or *hands*, outrank other hands, based on the frequency with which these combinations appear. The player with the best poker hand at the [showdown](#) wins the [pot](#).

Although used in poker, these hand rankings are also used in a variety of other [card games](#).

Standard ranking

A [poker hand](#) consists of five cards, no more, no less. Although in many poker games each player has seven (or more) cards to play, the sixth and seventh cards are not used to determine the winner. If two or more players have identical five-card hands, they divide the pot equally between them.

The individual cards are ranked ace (high), king, queen, jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 (low). An ace may also be used as a low card, below the 2, in making a straight or a straight flush. Suits have no rank in poker, and are not used to determine the winner of a hand.

Royal flush

A **royal flush** is a poker hand containing an ace, king, queen, jack, and a 10 of the same suit (for example **AS KS QS JS 10S**). Because it is both a straight (having five cards in sequential rank) and a flush (having five cards of the same suit), it is also known as an **ace-high straight flush**.

Straight flush

A **straight flush** is a poker hand such as **QS JS 10S 9S 8S**, which contains five cards in sequence, all of the same suit. Two such hands are compared by their high card in the same way as are straights. The low ace rule also applies: **5D 4D 3D 2D AD** is a 5-high straight flush (also known as a "steel wheel"). An ace-high straight flush such as **AC KC QC JC 10C** is called a royal flush, and is the highest ranking standard poker hand.

Examples:

- **7H 6H 5H 4H 3H** beats **5S 4S 3S 2S AS**
- **JC 10C 9C 8C 7C** ties **JD 10D 9D 8D 7D**

Four of a kind

Four of a kind is a poker hand such as **9C 9S 9D 9H JH**, which contains four cards of one rank, and an unmatched card. It is also called *quads*. It ranks above a full house and below a straight flush. Higher ranking four of a kinds defeat lower ranking ones. Between two equal sets of four of a kinds (possible in [wild card](#) and [community card](#) games), the kicker determines the winner.

Examples:

- **10C 10D 10H 10S 5D** ("four tens" or "quad tens") defeats **6D 6H 6S 6C KS** ("four sixes")
- **10C 10D 10H 10S QC** ("four tens, queen kicker") defeats **10C 10D 10H 10S 5D** ("four tens with a five")

Full house

Two examples of a full house: The three kings on the right beats the three queens on the left

A **full house** is a poker hand such as **3C 3S 3D 6C 6H**, which contains three matching cards of one rank, plus two matching cards of another rank. It ranks above a flush and below four of a kind. Between two full houses, the one with the higher ranking set of three wins. If two have the same set of three (possible in [wild card](#) and [community card](#) games),

the hand with the higher pair wins. Full houses are described by the three of a kind (e.g., KKK) and pair (e.g., 99), as in "Kings full of nines" or simply "Kings full".

Examples:

- **10S 10H 10D 4S 4D** ("tens full") defeats **9H 9C 9S AH AC** ("nines full")
- **KS KC KH 3D 3S** defeats **10S 10H 10D 4S 4D**
- **QH QD QC 8H 8C** ("queens full of eights" or "full house, queens over eights") defeats **QH QD QC 5S 5H** ("queens full of fives")

Flush

A **flush** is a poker hand such as **QC 10C 7C 6C 4C**, which contains five cards of the same suit, not in rank sequence. It ranks above a straight and below a full house. Two flushes are compared as if they were high card hands. In other words, the highest ranking card of each is compared to determine the winner; if both have the same high card, then the second-highest ranking card is compared, etc. The suits have no value: two flushes with the same five ranks of cards are tied. Flushes are described by the highest card, as in "queen-high flush".

Examples:

- **AH QH 10H 5H 3H** ("ace-high flush") defeats **KS QS JS 9S 6S** ("king-high flush")
- **AD KD 7D 6D 2D** ("flush, ace-king high") defeats **AH QH 10H 5H 3H** ("flush, ace-queen high")
- **QH 10H 9H 5H 2H** ("heart flush") ties **QS 10S 9S 5S 2S** ("spade flush")

Straight

A **straight** is a poker hand such as **QC JS 10S 9H 8H**, which contains five cards of sequential rank, of varying suits. It ranks above three of a kind and below a flush. Two straights are ranked by comparing the high card of each. Two straights with the same high card are of equal value, and split any winnings (straights are the most commonly tied hands in poker, especially in [community card poker](#) games). Straights are described by the highest card, as in "queen-high straight" or "straight to the queen".

Examples:

- **8S 7S 6H 5H 4S** ("eight-high straight") defeats **6D 5S 4D 3H 2C** ("six-high straight")
- **8S 7S 6H 5H 4S** ties **8H 7D 6C 5C 4H**

A hand such as **AC KC QD JS 10S** is an ace-high straight, and ranks above a king-high straight such as **KH QS JH 10H 9D**. But the ace may also be played as a 1-spot in a hand such as **5S 4D 3D 2S AC**, called a *wheel* or five-high straight, which ranks below the six-high straight **6S 5C 4C 3H 2H**. The ace may not "wrap around", or play both high and low in the same hand: **3C 2D AS KS QC** is not a straight, but just ace-high no pair.

Three of a kind

Three of a kind is a poker hand such as **2D 2S 2H KS 6S**, which contains three cards of the same rank, plus two unmatched cards. It ranks above two pair and below a straight. Higher ranking three of a kind defeat lower ranking three of a kind. If two hands have the same rank three of a kind (possible in games with [wild cards](#) or [community cards](#)), the kickers are compared to break the tie.

Examples:

- **8S 8H 8D 5S 3C** ("three eights") defeats **5C 5H 5D QD 10C** ("three fives")
- **8S 8H 8D AC 2D** ("three eights, ace kicker") defeats **8S 8H 8D 5S 3C** ("three eights, five kicker")

Two pair

A poker hand such as **JH JC 4C 4S 9S**, which contains two cards of the same rank, plus two cards of another rank (that match each other but not the first pair), plus one unmatched card, is called **two pair**. It ranks above one pair and below three of a kind. Between two hands containing two pair, the higher ranking pair of each is first compared, and the higher pair wins. If both have the same **top pair**, then the second pair of each is compared. Finally, if both hands have the same two pairs, the kicker determines the winner. Two pair are described by the higher pair (e.g., KK) and the lower pair (e.g., 99), as in "Kings over nines", "Kings and nines" or simply "Kings up".

Examples:

- **KH KD 2C 2D JH** ("kings up") defeats **JD JS 10S 10C 9S** ("jacks up")
- **9C 9D 7D 7S 6H** ("nines and sevens") defeats **9H 9S 5H 5D KC** ("nines and fives")
- **4S 4C 3S 3H KD** ("fours and treys, king kicker") defeats **4H 4D 3D 3C 10S** ("fours and treys with a ten")

One pair

One pair is a poker hand such as **4H 4S KS 10D 5S**, which contains two cards of the same rank, plus three unmatched cards. It ranks above any high card hand, but below all other poker hands. Higher ranking pairs defeat lower ranking pairs. If two hands have the same rank of pair, the non-paired cards in each hand (the kickers) are compared to determine the winner.

Examples:

- **10C 10S 6S 4H 2H** ("pair of tens") defeats **9H 9C AH QD 10D** ("pair of nines")
- **10H 10D JD 3H 2C** ("tens with jack kicker") defeats **10C 10S 6S 4H 2H**
- **2D 2H 8S 5C 4C** ("deuces, eight-five-four") defeats **2C 2S 8C 5H 3H** ("deuces, eight-five-trey")

High card

A **no-pair** or **high-card** hand is a poker hand such as **KH JC 8C 7D 3S**, in which no two cards have the same rank, the five cards are not in sequence, and the five cards are not all the same suit. It can also be referred to as "nothing" or "garbage," and many other derogatory terms. It ranks below all other poker hands. Two such hands are ranked by comparing the highest ranking card; if those are equal, then the next highest ranking card; if those are equal, then the third highest ranking card, etc. No-pair hands are described by the one or two highest cards in the hand, such as "king high" or "ace-queen high", or by as many cards as are necessary to break a tie.

Examples:

- **AD 10D 9S 5C 4C** ("ace high") defeats **KC QD JC 8H 7H** ("king high")
- **AC QC 7D 5H 2C** ("ace-queen") defeats **AD 10D 9S 5C 4C** ("ace-ten")
- **7S 6C 5C 4D 2H** ("seven-six-five-four") defeats **7C 6D 5D 3H 2C** ("seven-six-five-trey")

Low-poker ranking

Ace-to-five

Ace-to-five low is the most common method for evaluating [low hands](#) in [poker](#), nearly universal in U.S. casinos, especially in [high-low split](#) games.

As in all [low hand](#) games, pairs count against the player. That is, any hand with no pair defeats any hand with a pair; one pair hands defeat two pair or three-of-a-kind, etc. No-pair hands are compared starting with the highest ranking card, just as in high poker, except that the [high hand](#) loses. In ace-to-five low, straights and flushes are ignored, and aces play as the lowest card.

For example, the hand **8-5-4-3-2** defeats **9-7-6-4-3**, because eight-high is lower than nine-high. The hand **7-6-5-4-3** defeats both, because seven-high is lower still, even though it would be a straight if played for high. Aces are low, so **8-5-4-3-A** defeats **8-5-4-3-2**. Also, **A-A-9-5-3** (a pair of aces) defeats **2-2-5-4-3** (a pair of deuces), but both of those would lose to any no-pair hand such as **K-J-8-6-4**. In the rare event that hands with pairs tie, kickers are used just as in high poker (but reversed): **3-3-6-4-2** defeats **3-3-6-5-A**.

This is called ace-to-five low because the lowest (and therefore best) possible hand is **5-4-3-2-A**, called a wheel. The next best possible hand is **6-4-3-2-A**, followed by **6-5-3-2-A**, **6-5-4-2-A**, **6-5-4-3-A**, **6-5-4-3-2**, **7-4-3-2-A**, **7-5-3-2-A**, etc.

When speaking, low hands are referred to by their highest ranking card or cards. Any nine-high hand can be called "a nine", and is defeated by any "eight". Two cards are frequently used: the hand **8-6-5-4-2** can be called "an eight-six" and will defeat "an eight-seven" such as **8-7-5-4-A**.

Another common notation is calling a particular low hand "smooth" or "rough." A smooth low hand is one where the remaining cards after the highest card are themselves very low; a rough low hand is one where the remaining cards are high. For instance, **8-7-6-**

3-A would be referred to as a "rough eight," but **8-4-3-2-A** would be referred to as a "smooth eight."

[High-low split](#) games with ace-to-five low are usually played [cards speak](#), that is, without a [declaration](#). Frequently a qualifier is required for low (typically 8-high or 9-high). Some hands (particularly small straights and flushes) may be both the low hand and the high hand, and are particularly powerful (or particularly dangerous if they are mediocre both ways). Winning both halves of the pot in a split-pot game is called "scooping" or "hogging" the pot. The perfect hand in such a game is called a "steel wheel", **5-4-3-2-A** of one suit, which plays both as perfect low and a [straight flush](#) high. Note that it is possible--though unlikely--to have this hand and still lose money. If the pot has three players, and one other player has a mixed-suit wheel, and a third has better straight flush, the higher straight flush wins the high half of the pot, and the two wheels split the low half, hence the steel wheel wins only a quarter of a three-way pot.

Ace-to-five lowball, a five-card draw variant, is often played with a joker added to the deck. The joker plays as the lowest card not already present in the hand (in other words, it is a [wild card](#)): **7-5-4-Joker-A**, for example, the joker plays as a **2**. This can cause some interesting effects for high-low split games. Let's say that Alice has **6-5-4-3-2** (called a "straight six")--a reasonably good hand for both high and low. Burt has **Joker-6-5-4-3**. By applying the rule for wild cards in straights, Burt's joker plays as a **7** for high, giving him a seven-high straight to defeat Alice's six-high straight. For low, the joker plays as an ace--the lowest card not in Burt's hand--and his hand also defeats Alice for low, because his low hand is **6-5-4-3-A**, lower than her straight six by one notch. Jokers are very powerful in high-low split games.

Wheel

A **wheel** or **bicycle** is the poker hand **5-4-3-2-A**, regardless of suit, which is a five-high straight, the lowest-ranking of the straights.

In [ace-to-five low](#) poker, where aces are allowed to play as low and straights and flushes do not count against a hand's "low" status, this is the best possible hand. In high/low split games, it is both the best possible low hand and a competitive high hand.

The origin of the name "Wheel" probably derives from the Bicycle playing cards issued by the [U.S. Playing Card Company](#).

Ace-to-six

Ace-to-six low is a method for evaluating [low hands](#) in poker. It is not as commonly used as the [ace-to-five low](#) method, but it is common among home games in the eastern United States, and also common in the United Kingdom (it is the traditional ranking of London lowball, a [stud poker](#) variant).

As in all [lowball](#) games, pairs and trips are bad: that is, any hand with no pair defeats any hand with a pair; one pair hands defeat two pair or trips, etc. No-pair hands are compared starting with the highest ranking card, just as in high poker, except that the [high](#)

[hand](#) loses. In ace-to-six low, [straights](#) and [flushes](#) count for high (and are therefore bad), and aces play as the lowest card.

For example, the hand **8-5-4-3-2** defeats **9-7-6-4-3**, because eight-high is lower than nine-high. The hand **7-6-5-4-2** defeats both, because seven-high is lower still. The hand **7-6-5-4-3** would lose, because it is a straight. Aces are low, so **8-5-4-3-A** defeats **8-5-4-3-2**. Also, **A-A-9-5-3** (a pair of aces) defeats **2-2-5-4-3** (a pair of deuces), but both of those would lose to any no-pair hand such as **K-J-8-6-4**. In the rare event that hands with pairs tie, kickers are used just as in high poker (but reversed): **3-3-6-4-2** defeats **3-3-6-5-A**.

It is called ace-to-six low because the best possible hand is **6-4-3-2-A**, followed by **6-5-3-2-A**, **6-5-4-2-A**, **6-5-4-3-A**, **7-4-3-2-A**, **7-5-3-2-A**, etc.

When speaking, low hands are referred to by their highest ranking card or cards. Any nine-high hand can be called "a nine", and is defeated by any "eight". Two cards are frequently used: the hand **8-6-5-4-2** can be called "an eight-six" and will defeat "an eight-seven" such as **8-7-5-4-A**.

A [wild card](#) plays as whatever rank would make the lowest hand. Thus, in **6-5-Joker-2-A**, the joker plays as a 3, while in **Joker-5-4-3-2** it would play as a 7 (an ace or six would make a straight).

[High-low split](#) games with ace-to-six low are usually played with a [declaration](#).

Deuce-to-seven

Deuce-to-seven low is a method for evaluating [low hands](#) in [poker](#). It is often called "Kansas City" low or just "low poker". It is almost the direct opposite of standard poker: [high hand](#) loses. It is not as commonly used as the [ace-to-five low](#) method.

As in all [lowball](#) games, pairs and trips are bad: that is, any hand with no pair defeats any hand with a pair; one pair hands defeat two pair or trips, etc. No-pair hands are compared starting with the highest ranking card, just as in high poker, except that the high hand loses. In deuce-to-seven low, [straights](#) and [flushes](#) count for high (and are therefore bad). Aces are always high (and therefore bad).

For example, the hand **8-5-4-3-2** defeats **9-7-6-4-3**, because eight-high is lower than nine-high. The hand **7-6-5-4-2** defeats both, because seven-high is lower still. The hand **7-6-5-4-3** would lose, because it is a straight. Aces are high, so **Q-8-5-4-3** defeats **A-8-5-4-3**. In the rare event that hands with pairs tie, kickers are used just as in high poker (but reversed): **3-3-6-4-2** defeats **3-3-6-5-2**.

A special rule is that a wheel is not considered a straight: **A-5-4-3-2** is simply ace-high no pair (it would therefore lose to any king-high, but would defeat **A-6-4-3-2**).

It's called deuce-to-seven low because the best possible hand is **7-5-4-3-2**, followed by **7-6-4-3-2**, **7-6-5-3-2**, **7-6-5-4-2**, **8-5-4-3-2**, **8-6-4-3-2**, etc.

When speaking, low hands are referred to by their highest ranking card or cards. Any nine-high hand can be called "a nine", and is defeated by any "eight". Two cards are frequently used: the hand **8-6-5-4-2** can be called "an eight-six" and will defeat "an eight-seven" such as **8-7-5-4-2**.

Another common notation is calling a particular low hand "smooth" or "rough." A smooth low hand is one where the remaining cards after the highest card are themselves

very low; a rough low hand is one where the remaining cards are high. For instance, **8-7-6-4-2** would be referred to as a "rough eight," but **8-5-4-3-2** would be referred to as a "smooth eight."

[Wild cards](#) are rarely used in deuce-to-seven games, but if used they play as whatever rank would make the lowest hand. Thus, in **7-6-Joker-3-2**, the joker plays as a **4**, while in **Joker-5-4-3-2** it would play as a **7** (a six would make a straight, and an ace would make ace-five high).

[High-low split](#) games with deuce-to-seven low are usually played with a [declaration](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | Domination | [Lowball](#) | Kicker | Open-ended

Betting structure

Procedure

Players in a [poker](#) game act in turn, in clockwise rotation (acting out of turn is a breach of etiquette and can negatively affect other players). When it is a player's turn to act, the first verbal declaration or action he takes binds him to his choice of action; this is to prevent a player from changing his action after seeing how other players react to his first action.

A player may fold by surrendering his cards (some games may have specific rules--for example, in [stud poker](#) one must turn one's upcards face down). A player may check by rapping the table or making any similar motion. All other bets are made by placing chips in front of the player, but not directly into the pot (this is called "splashing" the pot, and is also a breach of etiquette, because it prevents other players from verifying the bet amount).

Open

The act of making the first voluntary bet in a betting round is called **opening** the round. On the first betting round, it is also called **opening the pot**. Some [poker variations](#) have special rules about opening a round that may not apply to other bets. For example, a game may have a betting structure that specifies different allowable amounts for opening than for other bets, or may require a player to hold certain cards to open.

Call

To **call** is to match a bet or raise. A betting round ends when all active players have bet an equal amount or no opponents call a player's bet or raise. If no opponents call a player's bet or raise, the player wins the pot and the hand is over.

The second and subsequent calls of a particular bet amount are sometimes called [overcalls](#). A player calling a raise before he or she has invested money in the pot in that round is [cold calling](#). For example, if in a betting round, Alice bets, Bob raises, and Carol

calls, Carol "calls two bets cold". A player calling instead of raising with a strong hand is **smooth calling**, a form of **slow play**.

In public card rooms and casinos where verbal declarations are binding, the word "call" is such a declaration. In particular, the practice of saying "I call, and raise \$100" is considered a **string raise** and is not allowed. Saying "I call" commits you to the action of calling, and only calling.

Check

If no one has yet opened the betting round, a player may **check**, which is equivalent to calling the current bet of zero. When checking, a player declines making a bet; indicating that he does not choose to open, but that he wishes to keep his cards and retain the right to call or raise later in the same round if an opponent opens. In games played with blinds, players may not check on the opening round because they must either match (or raise) the big blind or fold. A player with a **live big blind** who chooses not to exercise his right to raise is said to **check his option**. If all players check, the betting round is over. A common way to signify checking is to tap the table with a fist or an open hand.

Raise

To **raise** is increase the size of the bet required to stay in the pot, forcing all subsequent players to call the new amount. If the current bet amount is nothing, this action is considered the opening bet. A player making the second (not counting the open) or subsequent raise of a betting round is said to **reraise**.

Standard poker rules require that any raise must at least equal the amount of the previous raise. For example, if a player in a *spread-limit* or *no-limit* game bets \$5, the next player may raise by another \$5 or more, but he may not raise by only \$2, even if that would otherwise conform to the game's betting structure. The primary purpose of this rule is to avoid game delays caused by "nuisance" raises (small raises of large bets that do not affect the bet amount much but that take time). This rule is overridden by table stakes rules, so that a player may in fact raise a \$5 bet by \$2 if that \$2 is his entire remaining stake.

In most casinos, fixed-limit and spread-limit games cap the total number of raises allowed in a single betting round (typically three or four, not including the opening bet of a round). For example in a casino with a three-raise rule, if one player opens the betting for \$5, the next raises by \$5 making it \$10, a third player raises another \$5, and a fourth player raises \$5 again making the current bet \$20, the betting is said to be **capped** at that point, and no further raises beyond the \$20 level will be allowed on that round. It is common to suspend this rule when there are only two players betting in the round (called being **heads-up**), since either player can call the last raise if they wish. Pot-limit and no-limit games do not have a limit on the number of raises.

Fold

To **fold** is to discard one's hand and forfeit interest in the current pot. Folding may be indicated verbally or by discarding one's hand facedown into the pile of other discards called the **muck**. In [stud poker](#) played in the United States, it is customary to signal folding by turning all of one's cards face down. In casinos in the United Kingdom, a player folds by giving his hand as is to the "house" dealer, who will spread the hand's upcards for the other players to see before mucking them.

It is a serious breach of etiquette to fold **out of turn**, that is, when it is not the folding player's turn to act, because this can harm other players. For example, if there are three players remaining and the first player in turn bets, the third player folding out of turn gives valuable strategic information to the second player (who is **in turn** at this point), to the detriment of the bettor. In some games, even folding in turn when a player is entitled to check (because there is no bet facing the player) is considered an out of turn fold since it gives away information to which other players would otherwise not be entitled. Finally, if a player folds out of turn in a [stud poker](#) game, the player in turn may demand that his upcards remain exposed until he has completed his turn. When folding, concealed cards should not be exposed unless no further betting is possible in the hand (i.e., unless the fold awards the pot to the only remaining player). A player is never required to expose his concealed cards when folding prior to the [showdown](#).

Forced bets

All poker games require some forced bets in order to create an initial stake for the players to contest. The requirements for forced bets, and the betting limits of the game (see below) are collectively called the game's *betting structure*.

Ante

An ante is a forced bet in which each player places an equal amount of money or chips into the pot before the deal begins. In games where the acting dealer changes each turn, it is not uncommon for the players to agree that the dealer provides the ante for each player. This simplifies betting, but causes minor inequities if other players come and go or miss their turn to deal.

Blinds

A [blind](#) or **blind bet** is a forced bet placed into the pot by one or more players before the deal begins, in a way that simulates bets made during play. The most common use of blinds as a betting structure calls for two blinds: the player after the dealer blinds about half of what would be a normal bet, and the next player blinds what would be a whole bet. Sometimes only one blind is used, and sometimes three. In the case of three blinds (usually one quarter, one quarter, and half a normal bet amount), the first blind goes "on the button", that is, is paid by the dealer.

For example, in a \$2-\$4 limit game, the first player to the dealer's left (who, if not for the blinds, would be the first to act) makes a blind bet of \$1, and the next player in turn posts a big blind of \$2. After the cards are dealt, play begins with the next player in turn (third from the dealer), who must either call \$2, raise, or fold. When the betting returns to the player who blinded \$1, he must equal the bet facing him (toward which he may count his \$1), raise, or fold. If there have been no raises when action first gets to the big blind (that is, the bet amount facing him is just the amount of the big blind he posted), the big blind has the option to raise or check. This right to raise (called the *option*) occurs only once: if his raise is now called by every player, the first betting round closes as usual.

In some fixed-limit and spread-limit games, the big blind amount may be less than the normal betting minimum. Players acting after a sub-minimum blind have the right to call the blind as it is, even though it is less than the amount they would be required to bet, or they may raise the amount needed to bring the current bet up to the normal minimum, called *completing* the bet. For example, a game with a \$5 fixed bet on the first round might have blinds of \$1 and \$2. Players acting after the blind may either call the \$2, or raise to \$5. After the bet is raised to \$5, the next raise must be to \$10 in accordance with the normal limits.

When a player in the blinds leaves the game

When one or more players in the small or big blinds leaves the game, an adjustment is required in the positioning of the blinds and the button. The two most common tournament rules for handling this situation are the *dead button* and the *moving button* rules. In online card rooms, a *simplified moving button* rule is usually employed. Note that other variations on these rules exist.

[Dead button rule](#)

Under the *dead button rule*, the big blind is posted by the player due for it, and the small blind and button are positioned accordingly, even if this means the small blind or the button is placed in front of an empty seat, giving the same player the privilege of last action on consecutive hands.

- If the small blind [busts out](#) (leaves the game), the button moves to the seat vacated by the eliminated small blind. The player who was the big blind now posts the small blind and the player to his left posts the big blind. Since the button is now located at an empty seat, the player who was the button will, in effect, be the button once again.
- If the big blind busts out, the button moves to the player who was the small blind and the player to the left of the eliminated big blind posts the big blind. There is no small blind for that hand. On the following deal, the button moves to the empty seat vacated by the eliminated player and the two players to the left post the normal blinds. Since the button is now located at an empty seat, the player who was the original small blind will, in effect, be the button once again.

- If both blinds bust out, the same player will effectively be the button three hands in a row. The button moves to the now empty seat vacated by the eliminated small blind and the player to the left of the eliminated big blind posts the big blind. There is no small blind for that hand. On the following deal, the button moves to the next empty seat (the seat vacated by the eliminated big blind player) and the two players to the left post the normal blinds.

Moving button rule

Under the *moving button rule*, the button always moves forward so that a player never has the right to act last for two consecutive hands. The blinds adjust accordingly, which may result in more than one small blind, and/or more than one big blind being posted in a given hand.

These rules are always followed when assigning the blinds:

1. The button always moves forward to the next seat occupied by a player.
2. The player two seats to the left of the button always posts a big blind, as well as any players that the big blind has skipped past.
3. Any player that posted a big blind in the previous hand, must post a small blind.

For the following examples, consider a hand just finished with Alice, Bob, Carol, David, and Ellen seated in order after the previous hand's dealer. Alice was the small blind in the previous hand, and Bob was the big blind.

- Under normal conditions, Alice will have the button the next hand, Bob will post the small blind, and Carol will post the big blind.
- If Alice busts out, or steps away from the table, the button will skip past the vacated seat to Bob. Bob will post his small blind on top of the button. Carol and David will both post big blinds.
 - The subsequent hand, Carol will have the button. Carol and David will both post small blinds, and Ellen will post the big blind.
- If Bob busts out or leaves the table, the button will move to Alice. Carol and David will both post big blinds.
 - The subsequent hand, Carol will post a small blind on the button. David will post a small blind and Ellen will post the big blind.
- If Alice and Bob both bust out, or step away from the game, the button will skip ahead to Carol. Carol, David, and Ellen will all post big blinds.
 - The subsequent hand, David will have the button. Carol will post a small blind behind the button, as well as David and Ellen posting small blinds, and the player after Ellen posting the big blind.

The moving button system can cause irregular blinds for several hands after a player leaves the game, and further complications can arise if players bust out on consecutive hands. However, the blinds will always eventually resolve to their normal positions.

Simplified moving button rule

Under the *simplified moving button rule*, normally used in on-line card rooms, the button always moves forward to the next player and the small and big blinds post in the two seats to the left of the button. Players may miss blinds.

When there are only two players

The normal rules for positioning the blinds do not apply when there are only two players at the table. The player on the button is always due the small blind, and the other player must pay the big blind. The player on the button is therefore the first to act before the flop, but last to act for all remaining betting rounds.

A special rule is also applied for placement of the button whenever the size of the table shrinks to two players. If three or more players are involved in a hand, and at the conclusion of the hand one or more players have busted out such that only two players remain for the next hand, the position of the button may need to be adjusted to begin heads-up play. The big blind always continues moving to the left, and then the button is positioned accordingly.

For example, in a three-handed game, Alice is the button, Bob is the small blind, and Carol is the big blind. If Alice busts out, the next hand Bob will be the big blind, and the button will skip past Bob and move to Carol. On the other hand, if Carol busts out, Alice will be the big blind, Bob will get the button and will have to pay the small blind for the second hand in a row.

Bring-ins

A **bring-in** is a type of forced bet that occurs after the cards are initially dealt, but before any other action. One player, usually chosen by the value of cards dealt face up on the initial deal, is forced to open the betting by some small amount, after which players act after him in normal rotation.

The bring-in is normally assigned on the first betting round of a [stud poker](#) game to the player whose upcards indicate the poorest hand. For example, in traditional [high hand](#) stud games and [high-low split](#) games, the player showing the lowest card pays the bring-in. In low hand games, the player with the highest card showing pays the bring-in. The [high card by suit](#) order can be used to break ties if necessary.

In most *fixed-limit* and some *spread-limit* games, the bring-in amount is less than the normal betting minimum. The player forced to pay the bring-in may choose either to pay only what is required or to make a normal bet. Players acting after a sub-minimum bring-in have the right to call the bring-in as it is, even though it is less than the amount they would be required to bet, or they may raise the amount needed to bring the current bet up to the normal minimum, called **completing** the bet. For example, a game with a \$5 fixed bet on the first round might have a bring-in of \$2. Players acting after the bring-in can either call the \$2, or raise to \$5. After the bet is raised to \$5, the next raise must be to \$10 in accordance with the normal limits.

In a game where the bring-in is equal to the fixed bet (this is rare and not recommended), the game must either allow the bring-in player to optionally come in for a raise, or else the bring-in must be treated as **live** in the same way as a *blind*, so that the player is guaranteed his right to raise on the first betting round if he chooses.

Straddle bets

A *straddle bet* is an optional (voluntary) blind bet made by a player before receiving his cards. Straddles are only used in games played with blind structures. Straddles are normally not permitted in tournament formats.

Live straddle

The player immediately to the left of the big blind may place a *live straddle* blind bet. The straddle must be a raise over the big blind. A straddle is a live bet; the player placing the straddle effectively becomes the "bigger blind". Action begins with the player to the left of the straddle. If action returns to the straddle without a raise, the straddle has the option to raise. The player to the left of a live straddle may *re-straddle* by placing a blind bet raising the original straddle.

Mississippi straddle

A *Mississippi straddle* buys last action before the flop. [House rules](#) permitting Mississippi straddles are common in the southern United States. Usually, a Mississippi straddle can be made from any position, although some house rules only permit the button or the player to the right of the button to place a Mississippi straddle. Like a live straddle, a Mississippi straddle must be at least the minimum raise. Action begins with the player to the left of the straddle. If, for example (in a game with \$10-\$25 blinds), the button puts a live \$50 on it, the first player to act would be the small blind, followed by the big blind, and so on. If action gets back to the straddle with no raise, the straddle has the option of raising. The player to the right of a Mississippi straddle may re-straddle by placing a blind bet raising the original straddle.

Sleepers

A *sleepers* is a blind raise placed from any position at the table other than under the gun.

Limits

Betting limits apply to the amount a player may open or raise, and come in four common forms: *no limit*, *pot limit* (the two collectively called **big bet poker**), *fixed limit*, and *spread limit*.

All such games have a minimum bet as well as the stated maximums, and also commonly a **betting unit**, which is the smallest denomination in which bets can be made. For example, it is common for games with \$20 and \$40 betting limits to have a minimum betting unit of \$5, so that all bets must be in multiples of \$5, to simplify game play. It is also common for some games to have a bring-in that is less than the minimum for other bets. In this case, players may either call the bring-in, or raise to the full amount of a normal bet, called **completing** the bet.

Outside of the United States, pot-limit and no-limit games are the most common. Many American home games are played with a spread limit, while casino games are often played with spread or fixed limits, though many casinos may have pot-limit or no-limit games as well. Fixed-limit and spread-limit games emphasise the skill of estimating odds, whereas pot-limit and no-limit games emphasize the skills of game theory and psychology. Almost all poker players believe that pot-limit and no-limit poker involve more skill than fixed-limit play. A few prominent players, most notably Mason Malmuth, believe that the richer tactics make fixed limit more skilled. Although the main event at the [World Series of Poker](#) is played no limit, most high stakes cash games are fixed limit, so it is unclear which format is the experts' choice.

Fixed limit

In a game played with a **fixed-limit** betting structure, a player chooses only whether to bet or not - the amount is fixed by rule. To enable the possibility of bluffing, the fixed amount generally doubles at some point in the game. This double wager amount is referred to as a [big bet](#).

For example, a four-round game called "20 and 40 limit" (usually written as \$20/\$40) may specify that each bet in the first two rounds is \$20, and that each [big bet](#) used in the third and fourth rounds is \$40. This amount applies to each raise, not the total amount bet in a round, so a player may bet \$20, be raised \$20, and then re-raise another \$20, for a total bet of \$60, in such a game.

Maximum number of raises

Most fixed-limit games will not allow more than a predefined number of raises in a betting round. The maximum number of raises depends on the casino house rules, and is usually posted conspicuously in the card room. Typically, an initial bet plus three raises, or a bet and four raises, are allowed.

Consider this example in a \$20/\$40 game, with a posted limit of a bet and three raises. During a \$20 round with three players, play could proceed as follows:

- Player A bets \$20.
- Player B puts in another bet, raises another \$20, making it \$40 to play.
- Player C puts in a third bet, raising another \$20 on that, thus making it \$60 to play.
- Player A puts in the fourth bet (she is usually said to **cap** the betting).

Once Player A has made her final bet, Players B and C may only call another two and one bets (respectively); they may not raise again because the betting is **capped**.

A common exception in this rule practiced in some card rooms is to allow unlimited raising when a pot is played heads up (when only two players are in the hand at the start of the betting round). Usually, this has occurred because all other players have folded, and only two remain. Many card rooms will permit these two players to continue re-raising each other until one player is all in.

Kill game

Sometimes a fixed-limit game is played as a **kill game**. Such a game is played with an additional blind, called the kill blind. The kill blind can be posted from any position at the table. The amount posted is typically twice the typical blind for that game. For example, in a \$20/\$40 game, the large blind is typically \$20. If this game were played with a full kill, the kill blind would be \$40. It is also common to find a game with a half kill. For example, when the kill is active in \$4/\$8 game with a half kill, the game is played at a \$6/\$12 limit. When the kill blind is posted, it changes the stakes of the game. For that hand, the game is played as if the game were a higher limit. In a \$20/\$40 game with a full kill blind posted, the hand is played as if the limit were \$40/\$80. The kill is said to be active when the kill blind is posted and the game is played at the higher limit.

Rules on how the kill is activated vary. On the east coast of the USA, the kill is typically activated by the previous pot being over a particular value. The most typical value is ten times the value of the large bet (in a \$20/\$40 game, the kill would be active if the previous pot won was greater than \$400). The winner of that pot is required to post the kill blind for the next hand. In the Pacific Northwest of the USA, a kill is typically activated when a particular player wins two pots in a row. After that player wins her second pot, she is required to post a kill blind and the kill is active for the next hand.

The term **kill**, when used in this context, should not be confused with *killing a hand*, which is a term used for a hand that was made a [dead hand](#) by action of a game official.

Spread limit

A game played with a **spread-limit** betting structure allows a player to raise any amount within a specified range.

For example, a game called "one to five limit" allows each bet to be anywhere from \$1 to \$5 (subject to other betting rules). These limits are typically larger in later rounds of multi-round games. For example, a game might be "one to five, ten on the end", meaning that early betting rounds allow bets of \$1 to \$5, and the last betting round allows bets of \$1 to \$10.

Pot limit

A game played with a **pot-limit** betting structure allows any player to raise up to an amount equal to the size of the whole pot before the raise.

For example, let us assume that there is \$10 in the pot at the start of a betting round. The first player may open the betting for up to \$10. If he does in fact open for \$10, the next player may raise to \$40 (after calling the \$10 bet, the total amount of the pot is \$30, so he may raise \$30). The third player would be entitled to raise to \$140 (after calling \$40, the pot would contain \$100, thus he may raise \$100). Any player may also raise less than the maximum so long as the amount of the raise is equal to or greater than any previous bet or raise in the same betting round.

Some pot-limit games make exceptions to the method described above when calculating the maximum raise in the betting round before the flop:

- Some structures treat the little blind as if it were the same size of the big blind in computing pot size. In such a structure, a player can open for a maximum of four times the size of the big blind. For example, if the blinds are \$5 and \$10, a player may open with a raise to \$40. (The range of options is to either open with a call of \$10, or raise in increments of five dollars to any amount from \$20 to \$40.) Subsequent players also treat the \$5 as if it were \$10 in computing the pot size, until the big blind is through acting on the first betting round.
- If the action folds all the way around to the small blind, the maximum amount the small blind can raise is also not universally agreed upon. Some games treat the big blind as a "raise" of the small blind for the purpose of calculating the maximum raise—the small blind is allowed to call the big blind, and then make a pot sized raise of twice the big blind, for a total bet of three times the big blind. Other games treat the blinds as dead money for the purpose of calculating the raise, and allow the small blind to make the same size raise as any other player, i.e. a total bet of three times the big blind plus the small blind.

Because of the disparity in methods of calculation, and the fact that the issue is certain to come up often, most major tournaments will announce the amount of the maximum opening raise to all players any time the betting limits are increased.

No limit

A game played with a **no-limit** betting structure allows each player to raise any amount of his stake at any time (subject to the table stakes rules and any other rules about raising).

Table stakes rules

All casinos and many home games play [poker](#) by what are called **table stakes** rules, which state that each player starts each deal with a certain stake, and plays that deal with that stake. He may not remove money from the table or add money from his pocket during the play of a hand. Nor is a player allowed to hide or misrepresent the amount of his stake from other players; he must truthfully disclose the amount when asked. This requires some special rules to handle the case when a player is faced with a bet that he cannot call with his available stake.

"All in"

When a player is faced with a current bet amount that he has insufficient remaining stake to call and he wishes to call (he may of course fold without the need of special rules), he bets the remainder of his stake and declares himself **all in**. He may now hold onto his cards for the remainder of the deal as if he had called every bet, but he may not win any more money from any player above the amount of his bet.

For example, let's assume that the first player in a betting round opens for \$20, and the next player to bet has only \$5 remaining of his stake. He bets the \$5, declaring himself all in, and holds onto his cards. The next player in turn still has the \$20 bet facing him, and if he can cover it he must call \$20 or fold. If he calls \$20, thus ending the betting round, instead of collecting all bets into the central pot as usual, the following procedure is applied: since there is an all-in player with only \$5 bet, his \$5, and \$5 from each of the other players, is collected into the central pot (now called the **main pot**), as if the final bet had been only \$5. This main pot (which may include any antes or bets from previous rounds) is the most the all-in player is eligible to win. The remaining money from the still-active bettors, in this case \$15 apiece, is collected into a **side pot** that only the players who contributed to it are eligible to win. If there are further betting rounds, all bets are placed into the side pot while the all-in player continues to hold his cards but does not participate in further betting. Upon the [showdown](#), the players eligible for the side pot—and only those players—reveal their hands, and the winner among them takes the side pot, regardless of what the all-in player holds (indeed, before he even shows). After the side pot is awarded, the all-in player then shows his hand, and if it is superior to all others shown, he wins the main pot (otherwise he loses as usual).

There is a strategic advantage to being all in: a player cannot be [bluffed](#), because he is entitled to hold his cards and see the showdown without risking any more money. Opponents who continue to bet after the player is all in can still bluff each other out of the side pot, which is also to the player's advantage since bluffing between opponents may reduce his competition. But these advantages are offset by the disadvantage that the player cannot win any more money than what his stake can cover.

All-in before the deal

If a player does not have sufficient money to cover the ante and blinds due, that player is automatically all-in for the coming hand. Any money the player holds must be applied to the ante first, and if the full ante is covered, the remaining money is applied towards the blind.

If a player is all-in for part of the ante, or the exact amount of the ante, an equal amount of every other player's ante is placed in the main pot, with any remaining fraction of the ante and all blinds and further bets in the side pot.

If a player is all-in for part of a blind, all antes go into the main pot. Players to act must call the complete amount of the big blind to call, even if the all-in player has posted less than a full big blind. At the end of the betting round, the bets and calls will be divided into the main pot and side pot as usual.

For example, Alice is playing at a table with 10 players in a tournament with an ante of \$100 and blinds of \$400/\$800. Alice is due the big blind but she only has \$800. She must pay the \$100 ante and apply the remaining \$700 towards the big blind, and she is all-in. Bob, next to act, calls \$800, the full big blind amount. Carol raises to \$1600 total. All remaining players fold, the small blind folds, and Bob folds. The amount in the main pot is \$1000 (the sum of all antes) plus the full \$400 small blind since Alice had this amount covered, plus \$700 from Alice and every other player who called at least that

amount, namely Bob and Carol. The main pot is therefore $\$1000 + \$400 + \$2100 = \3500 . The side pot of $\$1000$ ($\$100$ in excess of Alice's all-in from Bob, and $\$900$ in excess of Alice's all-in from Carol) is paid immediately to Carol when Bob folds.

Incomplete raise

If a player goes all in with a raise rather than a call, another special rule comes into play. There are two options in common use: pot-limit and no-limit games usually use what is called the **full bet rule**, while fixed-limit and spread-limit games may use either the full bet rule or the **half bet rule**. The full bet rule states that if the amount of an all-in raise does not equal the full amount of the previous raise, it does not constitute a "real" raise, and therefore does not reopen the betting action. The half bet rule states that if an all-in raise is equal to or larger than half the bet being raised, it does constitute a raise and reopens the action.

For example, a player opens the betting round for $\$20$, and the next player has a total stake of $\$25$. He may raise to $\$25$, declaring himself all in, but this does not constitute a "real" raise, in the following sense: if a third player now calls the $\$25$, and the first player's turn to act comes up, he must now call the additional $\$5$, but he does not have the right to reraise further. The all-in player's pseudo-raise was really just a call with some extra money, and the third player's call was just a call, so the initial opener's bet was simply called by both remaining players, closing the betting round (even though he must still equalize the money by putting in the additional $\$5$). If the half bet rule were being used, and the all-in player had raised to $\$30$ instead of $\$25$, then that raise would count as a genuine raise and the first player would be entitled to reraise if he chose to (this would create a side pot for the amount of his reraise and the third player's call, if any).

Opening all-in hands

When all players are all in, or one player is playing only against opponents who are all in, no more betting can take place. Some casinos and many major tournaments require that all players still involved **open**, or immediately reveal, their hole cards in this case—the dealer will not continue dealing until all hands are flipped up. Likewise, any other cards that would normally be dealt face down, such as the final card in [seven-card stud](#), may be dealt face-up. This rule discourages a form of collusion called "chip dumping", in which one player deliberately loses his chips to another to give that player a greater chance of winning the tournament.

Open stakes

The alternative to table stakes rules is called "open stakes", in which players are allowed to buy more chips during the hand and even to borrow money (often called "going light"). This may be appropriate for home or private games but is never allowed in casinos.

First, a player may go all in in exactly the same manner as in table stakes if he so chooses, rather than adding to his stake or borrowing. Because it is a strategic advantage to go all in with some hands while being able to add to your stake with others, such games should strictly enforce a minimum buy-in that is several times the maximum bet (or blinds, in the case of a no-limit or pot-limit game). A player who goes all in and wins a pot that is less than the minimum buy-in may not then add to his stake or borrow money during any future hand until he rebuys an amount sufficient to bring his stake up to a full buy-in.

A player may instead choose to buy chips with cash out-of-pocket at any time, even during the play of a hand, and his bets are limited only by the specified betting structure of the game.

Finally, a player may also borrow money by betting with an IOU, called a "marker", payable to the winner of the pot. In order to bet with a marker, *all* players still active in the pot must agree to accept the marker. If any player refuses to accept a marker, the bettor may bet with cash out-of-pocket or go all-in. A player may also borrow money from a player not involved in the pot, giving him a personal marker in exchange for cash or chips, which the players in the pot are then compelled to accept. A player may borrow money in order to call a bet during a hand, and later in the same hand go all-in in the face of further betting; but if a player borrows money in order to raise, he forfeits the right to go all-in later in that same hand--if he is reraised, he *must* borrow money to call, or fold.

Just as in table stakes, no player may remove chips or cash from the table once they are put in play (except small amounts for refreshments, tips, and such)--this includes all markers, whether one's own or those won from other players.

Players should agree before play on the means and time limits of settling markers, and a convenient amount below which all markers must be accepted to simplify play.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Big bet](#) | [Blind](#) | [Closed](#) | [Post oak bluff](#) | [Pot](#) | [River](#) | [Showdown](#) | [Table stakes](#)

Big bet

In a fixed-limit poker game, a **big bet** (BB) is the larger of two fixed bet amounts. A big bet is used in the final rounds of a game to increase the pot amount and thereby enable the possibility of a bluff. Big bets are generally double the wager of the initial or *small bet*. Any multi-round poker game can use big bets to standardize wagers while maintaining a sufficient risk-ratio to encourage bluffing. Casino poker tables use big bets to set a limit to the amount of money a patron can lose in each wager.

Statistical Analysis

Big bets are used in place of variable limit raises to add considerable risk to staying in a game until a hand is shown. This added risk enables other players to bluff or to win a considerable pot when proving that they weren't bluffing. Other methods of adding structure to poker games include buy-in limits and maximum raise limits. Some sort of

table or bet limits are required in poker to keep a person with the "deepest pockets" from "buying the game."

Examples

While any multi-round poker game can use big bets, the unlimited buy-in nature of casino style play is best suited for BB limits. Casinos can advertise the relatively low maximum wager of the BB as a way of attracting players, and players can join the table at any time.

Casino style draw poker

Big bets are used in [draw poker](#) during the final round of betting to weed out tentative players. In theory, only those committed to their hand after seeing their final cards will be motivated to wager twice as much as their previous bet. In practice, however, additional motivation for players to fold is usually needed in a single draw game such as: a half-pot limit, a pot limit, or a spread limit. No limit poker is only employed when table limits are imposed, thereby disallowing casino guests to join the table after play has started.

Texas hold 'em

In a \$2/\$4 [Texas hold 'em](#) game, the *big bet* would be \$4, wagered in each bet of the last two cards. The \$2 would be the *small bet*, wagered during all other bets of the game. Given that a *small bet* is generally half of a *big bet* and that a *small blind* is generally half of the *small bet*, the minimum BB in casino style holdem is four cents. On the other side of the scale, the largest required BB in regular play is that of \$8000 at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. At this table, professionals like Doyle Brunson, Phil Ivey, Daniel Negreanu, Chau Giang, and Gus Hansen, along with wealthy tourists, are required to wager \$8000 in each bet of each of the final two rounds of the game.

Omaha hold 'em

Big Bets are used in [Omaha](#) poker to allow buy-ins of players at any time. The American casino variant of Omaha, called Omaha Eight-or-Better has a greater odds of winning and therefore less motivation to fold with a tentative hand. For that reason Omaha Eight-or-Better is sometimes played in a pot limit betting structure instead of big bets.

Casino style seven-card stud

Big bets are used in [seven-card stud](#), generally after the last upcard, to motivate tentative players who already have a lot of money in the pot to fold anyway. By the last upcard, seven-card stud players have wagered an ante and three rounds of betting. With that much money already in the pot, there is little motivation to drop out during the final two rounds of betting, especially when there is a possibility that another player may be

bluffing. The effect of adding the requirement of a big bet to the final two rounds of seven-card stud betting is that the game becomes one more of skill than of luck.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Blind

The blinds is a term used to describe the two [forced bets](#) posted by players to the left of the dealer in [flop-style poker](#) games.

The blinds exist because [Omaha](#) and [Texas hold 'em](#) are generally played without [antes](#), allowing a player to fold his hand without placing a bet. The blind bets introduce a regular cost to partake in the game, thus inducing a player enter pots in an attempt to compensate for the expense.

Generally, the "big blind" is equal to the minimum bet, and is twice as much as the "small blind". The small blind is posted by the player to the left of the [dealer button](#) while the big blind is posted by the player two to the left of the dealer button. After the cards are dealt, the player to the left of the big blind is the first to act during the first [betting](#) round.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Chopping the blinds](#)

Chopping the blinds

In [poker](#) games with [blinds](#), **chopping the blinds** is a custom that occurs when all active players fold to the blinds, who then remove their bets, ending the hand.

Chopping the blinds is a common occurrence in live ring games, whereas it is not allowed in tournament play, and is seldom, if ever, possible in play on the internet.

Why players chop

Players generally chop for two reasons.

1. Many players do not enjoy playing heads-up, and would rather play multi-way pots. In this case, chopping is more of a social custom.
2. Chopping allows the blinds to avoid paying the rake for a hand that is unlikely to develop into a large pot. In this case, chopping is more of an economic decision.

In higher-limit games, players tend to be tighter, and it is more common for everyone to fold to the blinds. In this case, chopping would occur so frequently that it would be pointless. Furthermore, higher-limit games are much more likely to be short-handed. Finally, the rake in higher-limit games is usually much smaller in comparison to the size of the pot, and if a collection is taken instead of a rake, this removes the economic reason for chopping. For all these reasons, chopping is much more common in lower-limit games than in higher-limit games.

Ethics of chopping

While chopping is a very common practice, some players feel it is antithetical to the nature of poker, especially in short-handed games. Mason Malmuth gives the following reasons why he believes chopping damages a poker game:

1. Chopping creates the illusion of partnerships.
2. Chopping takes the killer instinct out of the game.
3. Chopping allows a tight player to play ante-free.
4. Chopping creates confusion and hard feelings.
5. Chopping ruins short-handed games.

Many of these reasons overlap. For example, players who know each other tend to chop more often. This sometimes encourages these players to chop on future betting rounds, when everyone else has left the pot. This can be very confusing for other players, as it can give the illusion of partnership and collusion, even if such collusion is unintended.

General etiquette

There are some general guidelines which have developed in regard to chopping the blinds, which are as follows:

1. The decision whether to chop or not should be made prior to the hand being dealt. Specifically, the decision to chop should not be based on the strength of one's cards. Otherwise, players would only chop their weak blind hands when it comes around to them.
2. Generally, a player should adhere to a consistent *chopping policy* for each game they play. For example, a common chopping policy which many players adopt for community card games such as [holdem](#) is to *always* chop if there are at least 6 players dealt in, and to *never* chop if there are fewer than 6 players dealt in. Another common policy is simply never to chop at all.

The important point is that a player's chopping policy should be made *public* and should be *consistent* whenever they play. If a player decides to deviate from his or her usual chopping policy for a single hand or a single session, this should be publicly announced. Players who constantly change their chopping policy from session to session, or worse, from hand to hand, in order to secure an advantage, are generally considered to be engaging in unethical behaviour.

Reference

- Malmuth, Mason, *Poker Essays, Volume II*, Two Plus Two Publishing, ISBN 1-880685-15-9

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Closed

In the game of [poker](#), a betting round is said to be **closed** if no player will have the right to [raise](#) in the round. Normally this occurs when a player calls, and the next player whose turn it is to act is the one who made the last raise, so he cannot raise further (this ends the betting round). The round can also said to be closed before it has actually ended if there are still players remaining to act, but they will not be entitled to raise either because the last raise was a sub-minimum all-in raise (see [poker table stakes rules](#)) or because the limit ("cap") on allowed raises has been reached.

The term is also used to describe a category of poker game in which no cards held by individual players are visible to any other player before the [showdown](#). Most forms of [draw poker](#) are closed games (draw games with a [rollout](#) are an exception). Most forms of [stud poker](#), in contrast, are [open](#) games, because some players' cards are dealt face up or are exposed during play (blind stud games are an exception). Most [community card poker](#) games like [Texas hold 'em](#) are considered closed as well, because the only cards exposed before showdown belong to everyone; the individual players' cards are never seen until showdown.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Post oak bluff

A **post oak bluff** is a [bet](#) in no-limit or pot-limit [poker](#) which is an attempt to steal the [pot](#) in a way that holds little risk for the player making the bet.

A player executing the post oak bluff bets a small amount relative to the size of the pot, in order to create the impression that he is trying to lure the other player into the pot (as if he had a winning [hand](#)--this kind of bet with a strong hand is called a "here kitty kitty" bet). When successful, the other player(s) [fold](#) rather than fall into the perceived trap.

The term itself carries derogatory connotations because the play is often seen as "gutless," to quote Doyle Brunson who popularized the term in his book *Super System*, and who claims that he never makes the play.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Pot

The **pot** in [poker](#) refers to the sum of money that players wager during a single [hand](#) or game, according to the [betting rules](#) of the [variant](#) being played. It is likely that the word *pot* is related to or derived from the word *jackpot*.

At the conclusion of a hand, either by all but one player folding, or by [showdown](#), the pot is won or shared by the player(s) holding the winning cards. Sometimes a pot can be split between many players. This is particularly true in [high-low](#) games where not only the

highest hand can win, but under appropriate conditions, the lowest hand will win a share of the pot.

See "all in" for more information about *side pots*.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Split](#)

Split

In [poker](#) it is sometimes necessary to divide the [pot](#) among two or more players rather than awarding it all to a single player. This can happen because of ties, and also by playing intentional split-pot [poker variants](#) (the most typical of these is [high-low split poker](#), where the high hand and [low hand](#) split the pot).

To split a pot, one player uses both hands to take the chips from the pot and make stacks, placing them side by side to compare height (and therefore value). Equal stacks are placed aside. If there is more than one denomination of chip in the pot, the largest value chip is done first, and then progressively smaller value chips. If there is an odd number of larger chips, smaller chips from the pot can be used to equalize stacks or make change as necessary. Pots are always split down to the lowest denomination of chip used in the game. Three-way ties or further splits can also be done this way.

After fully dividing a pot, there may be a single odd lowest-denomination chip remaining (or two odd chips if splitting three ways, etc). Odd chips can be awarded in several ways, agreed upon before the beginning of the game. The following rules are common:

- If playing a high-low split game and dividing a pot between the high and low hands, always award the odd chip to the high hand.
- If splitting a pot because of tied hands, award the odd chip to the hand that contains the highest-ranking single card, [using suits](#) to break ties if necessary (clubs ranking the lowest, followed by diamonds, hearts, and spades as in bridge).
- (Variation) Between tied hands, award the odd chip to the first player in clockwise rotation from the dealer. (Note that in a casino stud game with a house dealer and no "buck" this gives an unfair advantage to players on the dealer's left, so the high card by suit method is preferred).
- (Variation) Leave the odd chip as an extra ante for the next deal. This is common in home games.

Sometimes it is necessary to further split a half pot into quarters, or even smaller portions. This is especially common in community card high-low split games such as [Omaha hold'em](#), where one player has the high hand and two or more players have tied low hands. Unfortunate players receiving such a fractional pot call it being *quartered*. When this happens, an exception to the odd chip rules above can be made: if the high hand wins its half of the pot alone, and the low half is going to be quartered, the odd chip (if any) from the first split should be placed in the low half, rather than being awarded to the high hand.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [High-low split](#) | [Lowball](#)

River

The **river** is the final card dealt in a [poker hand](#), to be followed by a final round of betting and, if necessary, a [showdown](#). In [Texas Hold'em](#) and [Omaha Hold'em](#), the river, also called **fifth street**, is the fifth and last card to be dealt to the [board](#), after the [flop](#) and [turn](#). In [Seven-card stud](#) the river is the final downcard dealt to each player, although in certain circumstances the river is dealt as a face-up community card.

The river can change the fortune of a game by delivering one player a card which they need to beat another player's already completed [hand](#). A player losing the [pot](#) due only to the river card is said to have been 'rivered' or 'drowned at the river'. Chancing the game on the river card is called 'living by the river', because of the dangers involved.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Showdown

In all [poker](#) games, if more than one player remains after the last betting round, remaining players expose and compare their hands to determine the winner or winners. This is called the **showdown**.

To win any part of a pot, a player must show all of his cards faceup on the table, whether they were used in the final hand played or not. [Cards speak](#) for themselves: the actual value of a player's [hand](#) prevails in the event a player mis-states the value of his hand.

Because exposing a losing hand gives information to an opponent, players may be reluctant to expose their hands until after their opponents have done so and will [muck](#) their losing hands without exposing them. *Robert's Rules of Poker* state that the last player to take [aggressive](#) action by a bet or raise is the first to show the hand, otherwise the first player to the left of the [dealer button](#) is the first to show the hand. If there is a side pot, players involved in the side pot should show their hands before anyone who is all-in for only the main pot. To speed up the game, a player holding a probable winner is encouraged to show the hand without delay. Any player who has been dealt in may request to see any hand that is eligible to participate in the showdown, even if the hand has been mucked.

There has been a recent trend in [public cardroom rules](#) to limit the ability of players to request to see mucked losing hands at the showdown. Specifically, some cardrooms only grant the right to view a mucked losing hand if the requesting player articulates a concern about possible collusion. Under such rules, players do not have an inherent right to view mucked hands.

Because the act of folding a losing hand rather than showing it down is so common, some players can take advantage of others who do this with a rare play called a *call-bluff*. For example, if you know that a player always folds rather than showing his hand if he was [bluffing](#), you might call his last bet even with a hand inferior to the one you suspect him of bluffing with, expecting that he will simply fold before he sees that you don't actually have him beat.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Table stakes

In [poker](#), **table stakes** refers to the maximum a player can bet and possibly lose during the course of a single hand. It is the money he or she has on the table at the beginning of that hand. This is in contrast to the classic poker notion from the movies of a player "betting the wagon wheels" when a good hand comes along.

See the main article at [poker table stakes rules](#).

In business, **Table Stakes** also refers to the minimum entry requirement for a market or business arrangement. It can refer to pricing, cost models, technology, or other capability that represents a minimum requirement to have a credible competitive starting position in a market or other business arrangement. For example, if you want to be a Wireless service provider the table stakes are the basic features you need to have in order to be in that business to achieve foundation capability - Network, Handsets, a data service, a mail server etc. Beyond that real competitive advantage comes from additional nimbleness and cost or product differentiation.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker variants

The card game of [poker](#) has many **variations**, most of them created in the United States in the mid-1900s. The standard order of play applies to most of these games, but to fully specify a poker game requires details about which [hand values](#) are used, the number of [betting](#) rounds, and exactly what cards are dealt and what other actions are taken between rounds.

Popular poker variants

The most popular poker variants can be divided into the following groups:

- **[Draw poker](#)**: Games in which players are dealt a complete hand, hidden, and then improve it by replacing cards. The most common of these is [Five-card draw](#).
- **[Stud poker](#)**: Games in which each player receives a combination of face-up cards and face-down cards in multiple betting rounds. The most common of these are [Seven-card stud](#) and [Five-card stud](#).
- **[Community card poker](#)**: Games in which each player's incomplete hidden hand is combined with shared face-up cards. The most common of these are [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold'em](#).

Other poker variants

Some poker games just don't fit neatly into the above categories, and some have features of more than one of these categories.

Stud Horse poker

Stud Horse poker is mentioned in the California law books as one of the gambling games prohibited in California's card rooms. There is no definition for it under the law, however. It appears not to be [Stud poker](#), which is not prohibited and is offered in several variations in California card rooms.

Oxford stud

Though called "stud", this is a combination stud/community card game that was popular at MIT in the 1960s, in which players receive individual downcards, individual upcards, and community cards. Many variations on this are possible by changing what kinds of cards and how many are dealt in various rounds.

One difficulty with such a combination is deciding the betting order: in stud games, the player with the best upcards showing bets first in each round (except sometimes the first, where the worst upcard is forced to begin the betting with a [Bring-in](#)). In community card games, each betting round begins with the same player (because there generally are no upcards), making it more positional. Oxford stud chooses to use the players' individual upcards for determining order, which makes it play more like stud.

First, each player is dealt two downcards and one upcard as in seven-card stud, followed by a first betting round. Like stud, the game is usually played with a [Bring-in](#), the lowest upcard being forced to pay it, and betting follows after that. After the first round is complete, two community cards are dealt to the table, followed by a second betting round, beginning with the player with the highest-ranking incomplete poker hand (as in stud) made from his upcard plus the two community cards. For example, if one player has a **K** upcard, and a second player has a **7** upcard, and the community cards are **T-7** (T = 10), the second player bets first (since he has a pair of **7**s, and the other player only has **K**-high). Then a second upcard is dealt to each player, followed by a third betting round, again beginning with the player who can make the best partial hand with his two upcards and the board. Finally, a third community card is dealt to table, followed by a fourth betting round and showdown. Note that as with Mississippi stud, each player has five cards of his hand exposed at this point (two of his own plus three on the board), so it is possible for a flush or straight to be the high hand for the purpose of first bet. At showdown each player makes the best five-card hand he can from the four cards he is dealt plus the three community cards, in any combination. This game is usually played [High-low split](#).

Billabong (and Shanghai)

Just as Oxford stud is a mixed stud/community card version of [Texas hold 'em](#), Billabong is a mixed version of Manila. Each player is dealt two downcards and one upcard. Low upcard starts the betting with a [Bring-in](#) if you are playing with one, otherwise high card starts the betting. Next, two community cards are dealt, followed by a second betting round, beginning with the player with the best exposed partial poker hand (counting the community cards, as in Oxford stud). Then a third community card is dealt, followed by a

third betting round. Finally a fourth community card is dealt, followed by a fourth betting round and showdown. Each player plays the best five-card hand he can make from the three in his hand plus the four on the board in any combination.

Shanghai is the same game with an extra hole card, but no more than two hole cards play. That is, the game begins with each player being dealt three downcards and one upcard; each player must discard one of his hole cards at some point during the game as determined ahead of time. The most common variation is to discard immediately as in Pineapple; the second most common is to discard just before showdown as in Tahoe.

Guts

Rather than the customary rounds of betting followed by a single [showdown](#), guts features multiple rounds, each of which consist of the decision to be "in" or "out", and each of which contains a showdown. Only the players who stay "in" participate in the showdown. In the most common version, the player who stays in with the best hand receives the current pot, while all other players who stayed in must match the pot to form the next pot. For example, if the pot is \$5 and three people stay in, then one player will receive the \$5 pot and two players will be forced to add \$5 each to the next pot, escalating the size of the pot for the next deal. Then the hand is re-dealt, and all players (even those who were "out" in the last round) can participate again. The game ends when only a single player has the guts to stay "in", and thus the pot is taken without replenishment.

Each player's hand usually consists of a reduced poker hand of either 2 or 3 cards. The cards are ranked as in regular 5-card poker, but in some variations straights and flushes count and in some they do not.

Another variation is for three-card guts. The hands are ranked as follows: Three of a kind, straight flush, straight, flush, pair. Each player receives two cards face down. In turn, each player declares whether they're in or out. If they're in, they receive their third card face up. The dealer declares last; if no other player has stayed in, then the dealer must have a pair or better to win the pot. Another variation is for the other players to have another chance to declare and challenge the dealer. With this variation, there is no requirement for the dealer's hand; if no one challenges him, the dealer wins.

[Declaring](#) "in" or "out" is similar to declaring high or low in [high-low](#) games. Each player takes a chip, places their hands under the table, and either places the chip in one fist or not. Each player then holds their closed fist above the table, and the players simultaneously open their hands to reveal their decision (a chip represents "in", an empty hand represents "out").

Because the pot can double (or more) each round, the stakes can grow exponentially, and pots of 50 or 100 times the original ante are possible.

There are many variations. Sometimes only the single player with the worst hand (who stayed in) must add to the pot, but they must double the pot rather than match it. In an especially vicious variation, nobody wins the pot unless nobody else stays in. This can degenerate quickly, when one player must add a large amount to the pot, and decides to stay in until he wins it back. Thus the game continues indefinitely, with one player continually adding larger and larger amounts to the pot. The pot may grow so big that no

player has enough cash to match it, leading to arguments about how to end the game. (This variation is not recommended when playing among friends. Often this variation is abandoned after the first really big pot leads to conflict.)

One solution to the exponentially growing pots is to cap them at 50x or 100x the ante. That is, if there are 5 players with an ante of \$1, the pot started at \$5. If there were 3 doublings, the pot is now at \$40. Suppose the "cap the pot at \$50" rule were in force. Then, if another doubling occurred, each loser would pay \$40, but the pot would now be at \$50 and the extra \$30 would be set aside as the ante once there's a hand with a winner and no loser.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Blind man's bluff](#) | [Casino game](#) | [Chicago](#) | [Chinese poker](#) | [Community card poker](#) | [Dealer's choice](#) | [Draw poker](#) | [H.O.S.E](#) | [Kuhn poker](#) | [Strip poker](#) | [Stud poker](#)

Blind man's bluff

Blind man's bluff is a version of [poker](#) which is unconventional in that each person sees the cards of all players *except his own*.

The standard version (also called **Indian poker**) is simply high card. Each player is dealt one card which he places on his forehead facing outwards, and a round of betting occurs, as players attempt to guess if they have the highest card based on what they see around them.

Other versions (**forehead stud**) are variations on [stud poker](#), in which one or more of the hole cards is hidden from its owner, but shown to all other players, as above.

During its coverage of the 2004 World Series of Poker, ESPN showed a Blind Man's Bluff version of [Texas hold'em](#).

Indian Poker is also an adapted drinking game, where the loser has to "chug" a beer for X seconds, where X equals the difference between the high card and the loser. If both players tie, they both drink for the amount of seconds on the card.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Casino game

Games available in most casinos are commonly called **casino games**. In a casino game, the players gamble casino chips on various possible random outcomes or combinations of outcomes. Casino games are available in online casinos, where permitted by law. Casino games can also be played outside of casinos for entertainment purposes, some on machines that simulate gambling.

House advantage

Casino games generally provide a predictable long-term advantage to the casino, or "house", while offering the player the possibility of a large short-term payout. Casino games often include an illusion of control, in which the player must make choices. However, in most cases it is not mathematically possible for a player to eliminate his or her inherent long-term disadvantage (the **house advantage**) in a casino game.

The player's disadvantage is a result of the casino not paying winning wagers according to the game's "true odds", which are the payouts that would be expected considering the odds of a wager either winning or losing. For example, if a game is played by wagering on the number that would result from the roll of one die, true odds would be 6 times the amount wagered since there is a 1 in 6 chance of any single number appearing. However, the casino may only pay 5 times the amount wagered for a winning wager.

Categories of casino games

There are three general categories of casino games:

Table games

Table games are played on a large table covered with a printed felt layout and may contain seating locations for players, with a dealer and other casino employees located on one side of the table (known as the "pit") and players located on the opposite side. Table games may be played with cards, dice, or other gaming equipment.

Gaming machines

Gaming machines, such as slot machines, are usually played by one player at a time and do not require the involvement of casino employees to play.

Random number games

Random number games are based upon the selection of random numbers, either from a computerized random number generator or from other gaming equipment. Random number games may be played at a table, such as Roulette, or through the purchase of paper tickets or cards, such as Keno or Bingo.

Common table games

Cards

- Asian stud
Baccarat

Blackjack

Casino war

- [Caribbean Stud Poker](#)
- [Chinese poker](#)
- Faro
- [Four card poker](#)
- [Let It Ride](#)
- Mambo stud
- [Pai gow poker](#)
- [Red dog](#)
- Spanish 21
- [Texas Hold'em Bonus Poker](#)
- [Three card poker](#)
- Two-up

Dice / Tiles

- Craps
Pai Gow
Sic bo
Chuck-a-luck

Random numbers

- Big Six wheel
Roulette

Common random number games (non-table)

- Bingo
Keno

Common gaming machines

- Slot machine
Video Lottery Terminal
Video poker

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Caribbean stud poker](#) | [Four card poker](#) | [Let It Ride](#) | [Pai gow poker](#) | [Red Dog](#) | [Three card poker](#)

Four card poker

Four card poker is a relatively new casino [card game](#) similar to [three card poker](#), invented by Roger Snow and owned by ShuffleMaster.

The player makes an ante bet and may also make an 'Aces Up' bet. Five playing cards are dealt to the player who has to make the best four-card [hand](#) possible. The dealer is dealt five cards face down, and one card face up, a total of six cards. He also he has to make the best four-card hand. After seeing his cards and the dealer's face-up card, the player can opt to fold, in which case he receives nothing, or play, by betting between one and three times his ante.

The best four-card hands for player and dealer will be compared according to the following ranking (from best worst):

- [Four of a kind](#)
- [Straight flush](#)
- [Three of a kind](#)
- [Flush](#)
- [Straight](#)
- [Two pair](#)
- [One pair](#)
- High card

If the player has three-of-a-kind or better, he will receive a bonus based on the ante wager as follows: three-of-a-kind: 2 to 1, straight flush 20 - 1, four of a kind 25-1.

The Aces Up bet is resolved independently of the dealer's hand, purely on the rank of the player's payout. The specific payout depends on the payout in use, with payouts for a pair-of-aces (pays even money on the Aces Up wager) or better.

The dealer has an advantage in having an extra card from which to select the best four, and the fact that if the player folds, he will lose his ante, even if his hand was better than the dealers. The player gets return from the bonus bet payment and from the ability to raise by more than one unit one the hand is good.

Strategy for when to raise and fold is fairly complex, but with optimal play the ante + play bet has a house edge of about 3.36% of the initial bet.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Let It Ride.

Let It Ride is a casino variation of [poker](#), played against the casino rather than against the other players. The game's relatively slow pace and the chance to pull back two of the three bets has made Let It Ride popular with older players and table game neophytes. At the same time, the game's slow pace has resulted in some casino dealers nicknaming the game "Let It Die". (A slow-paced game results in fewer tips for the dealer, hence the derogatory nickname.)

"Let It Ride" was invented by Shuffle Master, who owns the copyright to both the name of the game and the logo.

Basic rules

Let It Ride is a variation of [five card stud](#) where the player wagers on a poker hand consisting of three cards in the player's hand and two community cards in the dealer's hand. Like in video poker, the payout is determined by the ranking of the player's hand and the payout schedule.

Payout schedule

Hand - Payout

[Royal flush](#) - 1,000 to 1

[Straight flush](#) - 200 to 1

[Four of a kind](#) - 50 to 1

[Full house](#) - 11 to 1

[Flush](#) - 8 to 1

[Straight](#) - 5 to 1

[Three of a kind](#) - 3 to 1

[Two pair](#) - 2 to 1

[Pair](#) of 10's or better - 1 to 1

Please note that this is the standard payout schedule used at most casinos. Other payout schedules exist at the option of individual casinos, and appropriate strategy changes with different payout schedules.

How to Play

Bets

Each player places three equal bets in three spaces labeled (1),(2) and (\$).

Optional side bet

Some casinos offer an optional \$1 side bet. This side bet offers an additional payout if the player's first three cards contains a winning hand. The house edge on this bet is generally over 13%, making it one of the worst bets for a player in a casino. A more common \$1 side bet is against a fixed payout scheduling typically starting with two pair (typically a \$4 payout, but really only 3:1 since the original dollar is collected before the hand is dealt) or three of a kind (typically a \$8 payout).

The deal

Each player receives three face down cards. The dealer receives two cards face down.

The play

Let It Ride compares the player's poker hand with a payout chart, rather than comparing it with the other players' hands or the dealer's hand. The player's hand consists of the player's three cards and the dealer's two cards.

Each player is required to keep the three cards in full view of the dealer at all times.

Winners are paid according to the payout schedule (pair of 10's or better, two pair, etc.).

After looking at his three cards, each player has the option of pulling back the first bet or leaving the wager there. To leave the bet live is to "let it ride".

The dealer then exposes one community card. The players then each have the option of pulling back the second bet or letting it ride. After each player decides whether or not to pull back the second bet, the cards are placed face down on the designated area of the layout and may not be touched again.

The dealer then turns up the second community card and in a counterclockwise direction, turns the three cards of each player face up.

All losing wagers are then collected, and then all winning hands are paid by the dealer according to the payout schedule.

Regardless of the decision made concerning the first or second bets, a player may not take back the third bet.

Players are not allowed to show their hands to the other players, as this gives them an advantage by increasing their chances of knowing what cards the dealer is likely to turn up. In many casinos this is often not enforced at all or very sparingly. At a full table, it is sometimes difficult not to see the cards of a player on either side of you.

Strategy and house edge

Like blackjack and video poker, player decisions in this game affect the house edge. The strategy outlined below assumes the standard payout structure shown above. With correct strategy, the casino's edge in Let It Ride is about 3.5%.

When deciding whether or not to let bet (1) ride, you should pull your bet back unless you have one of the following:

- Any paying hand. (A pair of tens or better.)
- Any three cards to a royal flush.
- Any three suited connectors where the lowest card is three or above.
- Three to a straight flush, spread four, with at least one card that's ten or higher.
- Three to a straight flush, spread five, with at least two cards ten or higher.

When deciding whether or not to let bet (2) ride, you should pull your bet back unless you have one of the following:

- Any paying hand. (A pair of tens or better.)
- Any four to a flush.
- Any four to an outside straight.
- Any four to an inside straight, if the four cards are ten or higher.

An outside straight is a draw to a straight that can be completed by two different cards, like 4-5-6-7. Any 3 and any 8 will complete the straight. There are eight cards in the deck that will complete an outside straight draw.

An inside straight is a draw to a straight that can only be completed by one specific card, like 4-5-6-8. Any 7 will complete the straight. There are only four cards in the deck that will complete an inside straight draw.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Pai gow poker

Pai gow poker, or double-hand poker, is an Americanized version of Pai Gow, in that Pai Gow Poker is played with [playing cards](#) using [poker](#) hand rankings while Pai Gow is played with Chinese dominoes.

The game is played with a standard 52-card deck, plus a single joker. It is played on a table set for six players plus the dealer.

Each player is playing against the banker, who may be the casino dealer or one of the other players at the table.

Object of the Game

The object of the game is to create two poker hands out of the seven cards in your hand: A five-card poker hand and a two-card poker hand. The five-card hand must rank higher than your two-card hand. The two-card hand is often called the hand "in front" or "on top", and the five-card hand is called the hand "behind" or "bottom", as they are placed that way in front of the player when he is done setting them.

The Deal

The cards are shuffled, and then dealt to the table in seven face-down piles of seven cards, with four cards unused, regardless of the number of people playing.

Betting positions are assigned a number from 1 to 7, starting with whichever player is acting as banker that hand, and counting counter-clockwise around the table. A random number from 1 to 7 is determined (either electronically or manually with dice), and the deal begins with that assigned position and proceeds counter-clockwise.

One common way of using dice to determine the dealer starting number is to roll three six-sided dice, then count betting spots clockwise from the first until the number on the dice is reached.

If a player is not sitting on a particular spot, the hand is still assigned but then placed in the discards with the four unused cards.

Hand Rankings

The only two-card hands are one pair and high cards; no straights, flushes, and so on.

Five-card hands use standard [poker hand rankings](#), with one exception: in most Nevada casinos, the hand **A-2-3-4-5** ranks above a king-high straight, but below the ace-high straight **A-K-Q-J-10**. At most casinos in California & Michigan, this rule doesn't apply; the **A-2-3-4-5** is the lowest possible straight.

The joker plays as a [bug](#): that is, in the five-card hand it can be used to complete a straight or flush, if possible; otherwise it is an ace. In the two-card hand, it always plays as an ace. (Exception: In several Southern California casinos, the joker is *completely* [wild](#).)

Determining a Win

If each of your now-separated hands beats the banker's corresponding hand, then you win your bet. If only one of your hands beats the banker, then you push. If both of your hands lose to the banker, then you lose.

On each individual hand, ties go to the banker (for example, if your five-card hand loses to the banker and your two-card hand ties him, you lose). This gives the banker a small advantage. If you foul your hand, meaning that your low hand outranks your high hand or that there are an incorrect number of cards in each hand, there will be a penalty, either re-arrangement of the hand according to house rules or forfeiture of the hand.

In casino-banked games, the banker is generally required to set their hand in a pre-specified manner called "house way", so the dealer does not have to implement any strategy in order to beat the players. When a player is banking, he is free to set the hand however he chooses. However, the player has the option of "co-banking" with the house, and if this option is chosen, the player's hand must also be set the house way.

California casinos typically charge a flat fee per hand, such as 5 cents or one dollar, to play, win or lose. Other casinos take out of winnings a 5% commission. While this seems high, it should be noted that a hand of Pai Gow poker takes a long time to play compared to, say, blackjack, and there are many pushes, so the house doesn't collect that 5% as often as it would collect the house percentage on other games.

Basic Strategy

Generally speaking, one should try to set the highest two-card hand that you can legally set (that is, the best two-card hand that still leaves a higher five-card hand behind). More specifically, one should expect an "average" hand to be something like a medium-to-high pair behind in the five-card hand and an ace-high in front. Detailed computer analysis has been done to determine ideal strategy, but this requires memorizing large tables. A close approximation can be done with only a few rules of thumb. If you are playing in a casino, you can always ask that your hand be set "house way" if you are in doubt; most house strategies are quite reasonable and can be quite close to optimal strategy.

- If you have no pair, no straights, and no flushes, set the second- and third-highest cards in your two-card hand. For example, with **K-Q-J-9-7-4-3**, play **Q-J** and **K-9-7-4-3**. There are a few minor exceptions to this (for example, with **A-Q-10-9-5-4-2** it is slightly better to play **Q-9** and **A-10-5-4-2**), but these are rare and don't affect your win rate much.

- If you have nothing but a single pair, set it in your five-card hand and put the two highest remaining cards in your two-card hand. For example, with **A-Q-Q-9-6-5-3**, play **A-9** and **Q-Q-6-5-3**. There are no exceptions to this rule. This rule and the rule above will cover 90% of the hands you play.
- Two pair is the most common case where strategy isn't obvious. You can either play the high pair behind and small pair in front, or else two pair behind and high cards in front. The smaller your high pair and higher your remaining cards, the more you should be inclined to play two pair behind. If your side cards are small, or your larger pair is large, split the pairs. You should *always* split pairs if your high pair is aces, and almost always split if your high pair is kings or queens; they are high enough by themselves. With something like **J-J-4-4-A-Q-5** you can consider playing **A-Q** and **J-J-4-4-5**, since **A-Q** in front is not much worse than **4-4**, but two pair behind is much better than a single pair of jacks. Jacks and tens might be more inclined to split, because tens in front is *much* better than **A-Q**. With pairs as small as 7s and 8s, you might consider playing two pair behind if you can play a king-high or better in front. With 2s and 3s, you might even play as little as a queen-high in front. If you have no side cards higher than a jack, *always* split pairs, even 2s and 3s. (Most house ways split if there's a pair of 6s or higher, and split small pairs if there's no Ace for the low hand.)
- Three pair is a very good hand. *Always* play the highest pair in front, no exceptions. For example, with **K-K-7-7-4-4-A**, play **K-K** and **7-7-4-4-A**.
- If you have three of a kind and nothing else, play three of a kind behind and remaining high cards in front, unless they are aces--*always* split three aces, playing a pair of aces behind and ace-high in front. Occasionally, you can even split three kings if your remaining side cards are not queen-high (for example, with **K-K-K-J-9-7-6**, it is slightly better to play **K-J** and **K-K-9-7-6** than to play **J-9** and **K-K-K-7-6**). Most house ways only split three Aces.
- If you can play a straight or a flush or both, play whichever straight-or-better five-card hand makes the best two-card hand. For example, with **KS-9S-8C-7S-6C-5S-4S**, playing the flush would put **8-6** in front, playing the 9-high straight would put **K-4** up front, but the correct play is **K-9** and **8-7-6-5-4**. Occasionally, you will have a straight or flush with two pair; in that case, play as if it were two pair and ignore the straight or flush. This rule applies even if you can play a straight flush: if a straight or flush makes a better hand in front, play it that way.
- With a full house, generally play trips behind and the pair in front. The exception is if the pair is very small and your side cards are very high, for example, with **5-5-5-3-3-A-Q**, it might be better to play **A-Q** with the full house behind. These are rare, though, and you will never be making a big mistake if you never play a full house behind. House ways will always split the full house.
- With two sets of trips, play the higher as a pair in front, and the smaller trips behind. For example, with **Q-Q-Q-7-7-7-A**, play **Q-Q** and **7-7-7-A-Q**. No exceptions.

- With four of a kind, play as if it were two pair, but be slightly less inclined to split. For example, with **10-10-10-10-J-5-4**, play **10-10** and **10-10-J-5-4**; with **3-3-3-3-K-Q-7**, play **K-Q** and **3-3-3-3-7**. Most house ways always split the four of a kind.
- With three pair and a straight or flush (only possible with the joker), play as three pair (aces in front).

The cases below will probably never happen to you, but just in case:

- With four of a kind and a pair, play the pair in front unless it is very small *and* the four of a kind is very large. For example, with **9-9-9-9-7-7-K**, play **7-7** and **9-9-9-9-K**, but with **Q-Q-Q-Q-3-3-9**, you might play **Q-Q** and **Q-Q-3-3-9**. House ways always put the quartet in back and the pair in front.
- With a full house and a pair, play the higher pair in front and a full house in back.
- With four of a kind and trips, split the four to play a pair in front and full house behind. House ways will tend to break the trips.
- With all four aces and the joker, play a pair of aces in front and three aces (or a full house) behind UNLESS your back pair is a pair of kings; you get the honor of gloating on this one.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Pyramid poker](#)

Pyramid poker

Pyramid poker is a simplified version of [pai gow poker](#), where instead of seven cards, three cards are dealt face down. It uses a standard [52 card deck](#) without jokers. The hand rankings are just like in [poker](#) except that aces are always high. The dealer deals the player and himself 3 cards, which is arranged into a 2 card hand and a 1 card hand which should be smaller than the 2-card hand. There are no [straights or flushes](#) in the 2-card hand, and a higher ranked hand wins in both the hands. In order to win, the both the hands of the player has to be higher than the dealer's hands. If only one hand is higher and the other loses, then the bet is a tie or push. The player loses his bet if the dealer wins both ways. All copies (equal face value) shall go to the dealer giving the advantage to the house. There is also the "House Way" in this poker variant that adds more variety

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Red Dog

Red Dog, also known as **Red Dog Poker** or **Yablon**, is a game of chance played with [cards](#). It is a variation of acey-duecey or in-between. While found in some land casinos, its popularity has declined, although it is featured at many casinos online.

The deck used to play Red Dog is the standard, fifty two card variety. The game may be played with anywhere from one to eight decks, with an increasing number of decks decreasing the house edge — the house's advantage begins at 3.155% with one deck, but falls to 2.751% when eight decks are used. This is in contrast with some other casino card games, such as blackjack, where a higher number of decks used will increase the house edge.

The game only uses three cards at a time, which are ranked as in [poker](#), with aces high. Suit is irrelevant. A wager is placed, and two cards are placed face up on the table, with three possible outcomes:

- If the cards are consecutive in number (for example, a four and a five, or a jack and a queen), the hand is a push and the player's wager is returned.
- If the two cards are of equal value, a third card is dealt. If the third card is of the same value, then the payout for the player is 11:1, otherwise the hand is a push.
- If the two cards difference is greater than one place (for example, a three and an eight), then a spread is announced which determines the payoff, pending the outcome of a third card which will be dealt. If this third card's value falls between the first two, the player will receive a payoff according to the spread, otherwise the bet is lost. Before dealing the third card, the player has the option to double his bet.

The spread table is as follows:

Spread - Payout

- 1 card - 5 to 1
- 2 cards - 4 to 1
- 3 cards - 2 to 1
- 4+ cards - 1 to 1

Even when using eight decks, Red Dog does not offer favorable odds for the player in comparison with other games of chance common to casinos. There is little strategy involved; raises should only be made when a spread statistically favors a player (which is at seven cards or more, regardless of the number of decks used).

References

- [Odds and Strategy to Red Dog Poker](#) - From The Wizard of Odds
[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Three card poker

Three Card Poker also called **Tricard poker** is a [poker-based game](#) that has recently become somewhat popular in American casinos. It actually consists of two separate games, *Pairplus* and *Ante and Play*. The players can choose to play either or both of the games.

Pairplus

Pairplus is a simple bet on the [cards](#) with a payout for all hands of a [pair](#) or better. Below are six examples of actual payout tables used by some casinos.

Payoff Tables for Pairplus						
Hand	Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4	Table 5	Table 6
Straight flush	40 to 1	40 to 1	35 to 1	50 to 1	40 to 1	40 to 1
Three of a kind	30 to 1	25 to 1	25 to 1	30 to 1	30 to 1	30 to 1
Straight	6 to 1	6 to 1	6 to 1	6 to 1	5 to 1	6 to 1
Flush	4 to 1	4 to 1	4 to 1	3 to 1	4 to 1	3 to 1
Pair	1 to 1	1 to 1	1 to 1	1 to 1	1 to 1	1 to 1

The house advantage on *Pairplus* with the payout tables above ranges from 2.3% to 7.3%.

Ante and Play

Normal Ante and Play gameplay

For **Ante and Play**, the player places an "ante" bet before receiving his cards. With this information, the player can [fold](#) his cards and lose the ante bet, or [raise](#) by placing out a bet of equal money to the ante bet. If he chooses to play, there are three possibilities. The first is that the dealer does not 'qualify'. To qualify, the dealer must have a [hand](#) of a Queen High or better. If the dealer does not qualify, the ante bet is paid out even money, but the play bet is simply returned. If the dealer does qualify, the player wins if his hand is of higher value than the dealer's, and gets paid out even money on both his ante and play bets. If the dealer's hand is of higher value, the dealer takes the Ante and Play bets. Rules vary on what happens when the hands are of exactly equal value: some say that the player simply gets his money back, but others say that the player is paid even money on his bet.

The Ante Bonus

In addition to normal Ante and Play gameplay, there is a bonus payout on the ante bet for especially good hands.

Ante Bonus Payouts				
Hand	Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4
Straight flush	5 to 1	4 to 1	3 to 1	5 to 1
Three of a kind	4 to 1	3 to 1	2 to 1	3 to 1
Straight	1 to 1	1 to 1	1 to 1	1 to 1

These bonus payouts are paid only on the ante bet for any player who chooses to play, regardless of whether the dealer qualifies or whether the player wins or loses.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Three card brag](#)

Three card brag

Three card brag is an unusual British [card game](#) which is similar to [poker](#) but varies in betting style and hand rankings. Three card brag was played in the movie *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* directed by Guy Ritchie, where it was played without [table stakes](#).

Name: **Three card brag**

Aliases: **Brag, Three-card brag, 3-card brag**

Players: 3 to 8

Rules

Everyone antes, and players are each dealt 3 cards face down. There is a single round of betting, with action starting to the left of the dealer. Each player has the option of betting or folding. If there was a previous bet, the player must contribute at least that much more to the pot. (Unlike usual poker betting, your previous money contributed to the pot is ignored.) This betting continues until there are only two players left, at which point either player may double the previous bet to "see" his opponent. At this point, the two hands are revealed, and the player with the better hand takes the entire pot. If there is a tie, the player who is seeing loses.

Hand ranks

The hand rankings, from best to worst, are: three of a kind ("prial"), straight flush ("running flush"), straight ("run"), flush, pair, high card. The best prial is 3-3-3, followed by the usual order of A-A-A, K-K-K, etc. The best running flush or run is 3-2-A, followed by the usual order of A-K-Q, K-Q-J, etc. The flushes, pairs, and high cards have normal ranking (aces high).

A pair will beat 3/4 of hands. But watch out for unexpected runs and flushes! Priors are extremely rare (although a running flush is rarer even though it is ranked lower).

Betting

Players also have the option of playing blind (betting without looking at their cards). A blind player's costs are all half as much as an open (non-blind) player's. However, an open player may not see a blind player. If all other players fold to a blind player, the pot remains, everyone re-antes, and the blind player gets to keep his hand for the next round (in addition to the new one he is dealt). At any time, a player with two blind hands may look at one of them and decide whether to keep it or throw it away. If he keeps it, he throws away the other hand and is considered open. If he throws it away, he keeps the other hand and is

still blind. If everyone folds to a blind player with two hands, he must throw away one without looking.

Shuffling

Another unusual custom of Brag is that the deck is rarely shuffled. Unless a hand is seen and won by a prial, the cards from the hand are just placed on the bottom of the deck, and the next hand is dealt without shuffling.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Chicago

The [poker](#) game called **Chicago** is one of the most popular [card games](#) in Sweden today. Relying on the keeping of score instead of the placing of bets, it is suitable even for environments such as schools, where gambling is often prohibited. The game exists in countless versions, so here a (somewhat arbitrarily chosen) basic game will be followed by a number of possible variations.

Hand scores

The backbone of the game is that each [poker hand](#) has its own point value, as given in this table:

- [One pair](#) - 1 point.
- [Two pair](#) - 2 points.
- [Three of a kind](#) - 3 points.
- [Straight](#) - 4 points.
- [Flush](#) - 5 points.
- [Full House](#) - 6 points.
- [Four of a kind](#) - 7 points (but see Variations below).
- [Straight flush](#) - 8 points (but see Variations below).

Basic rules

Chicago is played with a standard 52-card deck. Each player is dealt five cards. The objective is to reach 52 points.

Exchanges and hand scoring

The players are allowed to exchange any number of their cards. If a player chooses to exchange one card only, he may choose "one up", meaning that he is dealt one card faced up, which he can either accept, or instead take the next card unseen. After the exchanges,

the player with the best hand (and only one player) gets points for his hand. Then follows another round of exchanges, but no hand scoring.

The game

Now, the first player begins by playing one card. Ordinary whist rules apply, but the players keep their cards collected by themselves. The player who wins the last trick gets 5 points. Also, the player with the best hand (whether it is the same player or not) gets points for his hand.

Chicago

After the second exchange, any player can choose to play *Chicago*. In this case, he pledges himself to win *all* the tricks of the game. If he does, he is awarded 15 points, but if he fails, the penalty is just as harsh: -15 points.

Variations

- Sometimes, a player given five cards below ten (either inclusive or exclusive) is allowed to replace them before the exchanges begin.
- Some play with 3 exchanges instead of 2. Then of course, scoring for hands will be made after both the first and the second exchange.
- Some do not use the "one up" rule.
- Often, one wants to give higher rewards than 7 or 8 points for [Four of a kind](#) and [Straight flush](#) respectively. There are several ways to achieve this, most notably by elevating the player immediately to 52 points, or lowering either all players or one player of the holder's choice to 0 points, or a combination of these. Holding a [Royal flush](#) usually means immediate victory.
- The confusion is great as to what scores are appointed in the case of *Chicago*. Some will argue that no player will get any points at all besides the +15 or -15, whilst others will allow almost any points. The +5 for the game, however, can never be stacked with the +15 for Chicago.
- Some prescribe that any player with 45 points or more is not allowed to replace any cards.
- Some require that after (and not in the same hand as) a player reaches 52 points, he must win the game once more before he actually wins. This handles the possibility that more than one player reach 52 points in the same hand.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Chinese poker

Chinese poker is a card game that has been played in the Asian community for many years. It has begun to gain popularity in the broader world of game players because it has all the features of a good gambling game:

- It is easy to learn.
- Anyone who knows the rank of [Poker hands](#) can begin playing after a few minutes of instruction.
- There is a large element of luck, so that a beginner has a real chance of winning, even against experienced opponents. Also, it is plausible for poor players to attribute bad results to their cards rather than their plays.
- There is still enough skill in the game that experts have a significant advantage when playing poor players.

Although it is basically a four player game, it can be played with 2 or 3 players. It is fun to play. Unexpected results and interesting hands are common.

Playing a Hand

In Chinese Poker, each player receives a 13 card hand from a standard 52 card deck. He then has to divide his cards into three Poker hands, two containing five cards each and one three card hand. The only restriction is that **both five card hands must outrank the three card hand** (Note: straights and flushes do not count in the three card hand). The higher ranking of the five card hands, called the Back hand, is placed face down on the table in front of the player. Then the other five card hand, called the Middle hand, is placed face down in front of the Back hand. Finally, the three card hand, called the Front hand, is placed (again face down) in front of the middle hand. When all four players have set their hands, the cards are turned face up and the deal is scored.

Variant

The game can be played with the middle hand being low, rather than high.

Scoring

The basic scoring rule is that comparisons are done head-to-head and that a player wins one unit for each hand (of the three) which outranks the corresponding hand of each opponent. Thus, unlike most poker games, being second-best at the table is good enough to win money. Also, due to the head-to-head nature of the comparisons, it's possible for different players to play for different stakes. For example, A and B could play for \$10/unit, while all other pairs play for \$1/unit. Many variations of scoring are in common use. Refer to the external links for more information.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Community card poker

About the time of World War II, many modern [poker](#) games used [community cards](#) (also called "shared cards" or "window cards"), which are cards dealt face up to the center of the table and shared by all players. In these games, each player is dealt privately an

incomplete hand ("hole cards"), which is then combined with the community cards to make a complete hand. The set of community cards is called the "board", and may be dealt in a simple line or arranged in a special pattern. Rules of each game determine how they may be combined with each player's private hand. The most popular community card game today is [Texas hold 'em](#), originating sometime in the 1920s.

In home games, it is typical to use [antes](#), while casinos typically use only [blinds](#) for these games. [Fixed limit](#) games are most common in casinos, while [spread limit](#) games are more common in home games. [No limit](#) and [pot limit](#) games are less common. Later betting rounds often have a higher limit than earlier betting rounds. Each betting round begins with the player to the dealer's left (when blinds are used, the first round begins with the player after the big blind), so community card games are generally [positional](#) games.

Most community card games do not play well with [lowball](#) hand values, though some do play very well at [high-low split](#), especially with [ace-to-five low](#) values, making it possible to win both halves of a pot. When played high-low split, there is generally a minimum qualifying hand for low (often 8-high), and it is played [cards speak](#).

Texas hold 'em

For more details on this topic, see [Texas hold 'em](#).

This is the most popular community card game today. Each player is dealt two private cards, after which there is a betting round. Then three community cards are dealt face up (in no particular order or pattern), followed by a second betting round. A fourth community card is followed by a third betting round, a fifth community card and the fourth and final betting round. At showdown, each player plays the best five-card hand he can make using any five cards among the two in his hand and the five on the board.

Double-board hold 'em

For double-board hold 'em, two separate five-card boards are dealt, and the high hand using each board takes half of the pot. For example, after the first betting round, three community cards are dealt to each of two separate boards; after the second round, another community card is dealt to each board; and before the final round, a fifth community card is dealt to each board (so there will be in total ten community cards, comprising two separate five-card hold'em boards).

This variant of Texas hold 'em is sometimes called "double-flop hold'em", which is a bit of a misnomer, since there are not just two flops, but also two turns and two rivers.

Omaha hold 'em

For more details on this topic, see [Omaha hold 'em](#).

Another hold 'em variant is Omaha hold'em. Each player is dealt four cards to his private hand instead of two. The betting rounds and layout of community cards is identical to Texas hold 'em. At showdown, each player's hand is the best five-card hand he can make from *exactly three* of the five cards on the board, plus *exactly two* of his own cards.

The most popular form of the game is high-low split, called many different names such as "Omaha Eight or better", "Omaha HiLo" or "Omaha8". Each player, using the above rules, makes a separate five-card high hand and five-card low hand, and the pot is split between the high and low (which may be the same player). To qualify for low, a player must be able to play an **8-7-6-5-4** or lower. A few casinos play with a **9**-low qualifier instead, but this is rare.

When high hands only are used, the game is generally called "Omaha high" to avoid ambiguity.

Omaha can be played fixed limit, [pot limit](#) (where it is often called "PLO") or no limit. It is sometimes played where each player gets five cards instead of four. The same rules apply for showdown: each player must use two of his cards with three of the community cards.

In the game of "Courcheval", popular in Europe, instead of betting on the initial four cards and then flopping three community cards for the second round, the first community card is dealt before the first betting round, so that each player has four private cards and the single community card on his first bet. Then two more community cards are dealt, and play proceeds exactly as in Omaha.

Pineapple - Crazy Pineapple - Tahoe hold 'em

Pineapple hold 'em exists halfway between Texas hold 'em and Omaha hold 'em. Players are initially dealt three cards. Each player then discards one of the three cards, and the game proceeds exactly as in Texas hold 'em. In Crazy Pineapple, the players discard their third card *after* the [flop](#) betting round, before the fourth community card is dealt. In Tahoe, players keep all three cards through showdown, but may not use all three of them to make a hand. Each player may use none, one, or two cards from his hand, combined with those on the board, to make his final five-card hand.

Crazy Pineapple and Tahoe are usually played high-low split.

Manila

One of the most popular games in Australian casinos is a Texas hold 'em variant called "Manila" (also called "Seven-up" in some places). It is played with a [Stripped deck](#) in which all cards below the rank of **7** are removed (leaving 32 cards). Each player is dealt two private cards, and a single community card is dealt face up, followed by the first betting round. Then a second community card is followed by a second round, a third community card and a third round, and fourth community card and a fourth round, and finally a fifth community card, fifth betting round, and showdown. On showdown, unlike Texas hold 'em (and more like Omaha), each player makes the best hand he can from *both* of his hole cards with *exactly three* of the five community cards.

Because of the stripped deck, a flush beats a full house. Also, an ace may *not* be played low for a straight (that is, the hand **A-7-8-9-10** is not a straight in Manila). Manila and its variants are rarely played high-low split (in fact, very few stripped deck games are ever played low).

Common variations involve dealing three cards to each player, one of which can either be discarded at some point (like Pineapple, above), or else held to the end, but maintaining

the requirement that each player play exactly two of his own cards with exactly three of the board. The three-card variant is sometimes played with 6s being restored to the deck, making it 36 cards.

Pinatubo

Because Manila has five betting rounds, it does not play well at no limit or pot limit. This can be easily modified by eliminating the betting round between the second and third community cards. So, each player is dealt two private cards and a single community card is dealt to the board, followed by the first betting round. Then *two* community cards are dealt, followed by a second betting round. Then a fourth community card and third betting round, a fifth and final community card and fourth betting round, followed by a showdown as above.

The three-card variant can be played this way as well (as with Manila, the player must use exactly two of his three hole cards with three of the board cards to make a hand).

"Home" games

Although some of these games (notably Chowaha and Tic tac toe) have been played in formal casino settings, they are generally better suited to less serious low-stakes home games. They also lend themselves to ad-hoc variation, since the games themselves have not been time-tested for balanced play as have many casino games, so making variations is likely to make the game much worse.

Cincinnati

Each player is dealt five hole cards, and then one community card is dealt face up to the table. After a first betting round, a second community card is dealt, followed by a second betting round. This continues until a fifth community card is dealt, followed by a fifth betting round and showdown. Each player plays the best five-card hand he can make from his five hole cards plus the five community cards in any combination. Some variants restrict each player to using exactly two of his hole cards (as in Omaha) or no more than two (as in Pineapple).

Iron cross

Each player is dealt five hole cards, and then five community cards are dealt one at a time followed by a betting round, exactly as in Cincinnati. But they are dealt in a cross pattern with a center card (dealt last) and four other cards to its left, right, top, and bottom. Each player plays the best five-card poker hand he can make from his five hole cards plus the three cards from either the vertical arm or the horizontal arm of the cross. A common variant is to make the center card wild, or the center card and all of the same rank wild.

One can also make a better game by reducing to four betting rounds: one after the hole cards are dealt but before any community cards are, then another after the left and right

cards of the cross are dealt at the same time, a third after the top and bottom cards of the cross are dealt, and a final round after the center card is dealt.

Chowaha

Each player is dealt two hole cards and there is a round of betting as in Texas hold'em. After betting is complete the dealer deals three sets of three community cards (F1, F2 and F3 in the diagram below). There is another round of betting and the dealer deals two turn cards (T1 and T2 in the diagram) followed by another round of betting. A single card is dealt (R1 in the diagram) and there is a final round of betting. Each player makes their best hand using both their hole cards plus three from one of the valid boards. There are four valid boards F1-F1-F1-T1-R1, F2-F2-F2-T1-R1, F2-F2-F2-T2-R1 and F3-F3-F3-T2-R1.

F1-F1-F1 \ T1 F2-F2-F2 < > R1 T2 F3-F3-F3 /

Chowaha is often played as a [high-low split](#) game in which case you can use one board for the high hand and another for the low hand.

Chowaha is occasionally played at low limits in casinos (usually in conjunction with B.A.R.G.E) and under must-drink, must-toke conditions.

Tic tac toe

In this game, each player will end up with two private cards, and there will be a board of nine cards arranged in a 3x3 square. Each player will make a five-card hand from a combination of his two cards plus any *consecutive row* of three on the board, either a horizontally, vertically, or diagonally (as in Tic-tac-toe). Variations exist in the number of betting rounds based on which community cards are revealed in what order. The simplest is probably to deal each player both hole cards then deal the three cards across the top of the 3x3 array before the first betting round; then deal the three cards across the bottom of the array followed by a second betting round; then deal the two cards on the left and right edge of the middle row, followed by a third round; and finally deal the center community card followed by a fourth betting round and showdown.

Another variation is to deal three or four hole cards to each player, though each player may still only play exactly two of them with any consecutive row of three from the grid.

A poker-like beginner's home game is also called "Tic tac toe"; it involves dealing each player two hole cards and then dealing the 3x3 grid face up, followed by a single betting round after which players announce the best hand they can make from their two cards plus any consecutive row, column, or diagonal of the board as above. Hole cards can be redealt several times to the same board of community cards. This is primarily for practice at recognizing and evaluating poker hands.

Lame-brain Pete

Three hole cards are dealt to each player, followed by a first betting round. Then a single community card is dealt, followed by a second betting round. Play continues with a single community card being added to the board followed by a betting round, until there are four community cards, for a total of five betting rounds. Upon showdown, the lowest-ranking card on the board, and all cards of that same rank either on the board or in players' hole cards, play as wild cards (thus, it is not possible to know exactly which cards will be wild until the end, unless a deuce appears on the board earlier than that). Each player makes his best five-card poker hand from his three hole cards plus the four community cards in any combination, with the low board card wild.

Six-pack

At showdown, each player will have two hole cards, and there will be six community cards on the board arranged in a circle (something like the even-hour marks on a clock). The rounds go like this: each player is dealt two hole cards, followed by the first betting round. Then two of the board cards at opposite sides of the circle (call them 12 o'clock and 6 o'clock) are dealt, followed by a second betting round. Two more opposite community cards are dealt (2 o'clock and 8 o'clock), followed by a third betting round. Finally, the 4 o'clock and 10 o'clock cards are dealt followed by a fourth and final betting round, and showdown.

At showdown, each player makes a hand by combining his two cards with any three *consecutive* cards of the board. That is, he can use 12, 2, and 4; or 2, 4, and 6; or 6, 8, and 10; etc. So cards dealt to opposite sides of the circle will never appear in the same final hand. With exactly two hole cards, there are only six possible choices for which hand to play. The game can be modified a bit by dealing three hole cards, where each player is required to use exactly two of them plus three consecutive board cards.

Spit in the ocean

While cards are dealt as in [stud poker](#), at any time during the deal one player can call "spit", whereupon the next card is turned face up as a community card. (This variant is mentioned in the Ray Stevens song Shriner's Convention.)

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Counterfeit](#) | [Omaha hold 'em](#) | [Texas hold 'em](#)

Counterfeit

In [community card poker](#), a player or hand is said to be **counterfeited** when a community card does not change the value of his hand, but makes it more likely that an opponent will beat it. This occurs primarily in [Omaha hold 'em](#) hi-lo split and sometimes in [Texas hold 'em](#). Counterfeiting also occurs in the [Badugi](#) variant of [draw poker](#).

Omaha hold 'em

The more common occurrence of counterfeiting in Omaha is when a person's best possible low hand, called the "nut low", is counterfeited. As an example, say Alice has **AS 3C JD QD** while Bob holds **AC 2D 9D JS** and Carol holds **9H TH KH AH**. If the [flop](#) comes **6H 7H 8H**, Carol has a lock on the high hand with her 10-high [straight flush](#), but Alice and Bob are still competing for the low half of the pot. Bob holds a **8-7-6-2-A**, ahead of Alice's **8-7-6-3-A**. In fact, Bob currently holds the nut low hand; no one can have a better low hand.

However, if the [turn](#) card is **2C**, Alice and Bob's fortunes have changed. *Alice* now has the nut-low of **7-6-3-2-A**, while Bob must still play the **A-2** from his hand for a low of **8-7-6-2-A**. The turn card did not make Bob's hand worse, but it did make Alice's hand better.

On the other hand, on a flop of **8-7-6**, a hand containing **A-2-3-4** is considered *counterfeit-proof*, because it currently is the nut low (**8-7-6-2-A**), and even if an **A** or a **2** arrives on the turn, it will *remain* the nut low (**7-6-3-2-A**). A player with this type of protection can be bolder in betting.

Texas hold 'em

Counterfeiting in Texas hold 'em is similar to Omaha, in that hands do not change value, but normally Texas hold 'em counterfeiting is less likely to cause a player to lose an entire pot. On a flop of **Q-J-T**, a player holding A-K will have flopped an ace-high Broadway straight. If the turn card comes a king, the player with A-K will still have the same straight, but now so will a player with A-7, making a tie. The A-K player's hand didn't get worse in rank, but it becomes less likely to win the entire pot. Counterfeiting in Texas hold 'em more often leads to ties, like in the example above, but in some cases it will lead to losses. For example, if the flop is **J-T-9**, and the turn a queen, a player who held K-Q will be counterfeited and able to lose to a player with A-K.

Badugi

If a player holds a hand such as A244 (all different suits), the hand value is really A24 as a player can only use one of the cards that is paired. This is known as a three-card hand. Similarly a hand such as A222 would only hold a final value of A2, a two-card hand, as the other 2 cards are counterfeited. A three-card hand beats any 2-card hand.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Omaha hold 'em

Omaha hold 'em (or **Omaha holdem** or simply **Omaha**) is a [community card poker](#) game ("flop game") similar to [Texas hold 'em](#), where each player is dealt four cards and must

make his best hand using exactly two of them, plus exactly three of the five community cards.

Explanation

In North American casinos, the unadorned term "Omaha" can refer to several games. Typically, it refers to the high-low split variant played with fixed limits: also called "Omaha eight-or-better", "Omaha Hi-Lo", "Omaha/8" and several other similar names. The original game is more commonly known as "Omaha High Only".

In Europe, "Omaha" still typically refers to the high version of the game, usually played [pot limit](#). Pot Limit Omaha is often abbreviated as "PLO". Pot-limit and no-limit Omaha eight-or-better can be found in some casinos and online, though no-limit is more rare.

It is often said that Omaha is a game of the 'nuts', i.e. the best possible high or low hand, because it frequently takes "[the nuts](#)" to win a showdown. It is also a game where between the cards in his hand and the community cards a player may have drawing possibilities to multiple different types of holdings. For example, a player may have both a draw to a flush and a full house using different combinations of cards. At times, the players themselves have trouble figuring out what draws and possibilities that their cards hold.

The basic differences between Omaha and Texas hold 'em are these: first, each player is dealt four cards to his private hand instead of two. The betting rounds and layout of community cards are identical. At showdown, each player's hand is the best five-card hand he can make from *exactly three* of the five cards on the board, plus *exactly two* of his own cards. Unlike Texas hold 'em, a player cannot play only one of his cards with four of the board, nor can he play the board, nor play three from his hand and two from the board, or any other combination. **Each player must play exactly two of his own cards with exactly three of the community cards.**

Some specific things to notice about Omaha hands are:

- As in Texas hold 'em, three or more suited cards on the board makes a flush possible, but unlike that game a player always needs two of that suit in his hand to play a flush. For example, with a board of **KS 9S QS QH 5S**, a player with **AS 2H 4H 5C** *cannot* play a flush using his ace as he could in Texas hold 'em; he must play two cards from his hand and only three from the board. A player with **2S 3S KD QD** *can* play the spade flush.
- Two pair on the board does not make a full house for anyone with a single matching card as it does in Texas hold 'em. For example, with a board of **JS JD 9D 5H 9C**, a hand of **AS 2S JH KD** cannot play a full house; he can only use his A-J to play **JS JH JD AS 9C**, since must play only three of the board cards. A player with **2C 5C 9S 10S** *can* use his 9-5 to play the full house **9S 9C 9D 5H 5C**.
- Likewise, with three of a kind on the board, a player must have a pair in his hand to make a full house. For example, with a board of **JS JD AD JH KC**, a player with **AS 2S 3H KD** does not have a full house, he only has three Jacks with an Ace-King kicker, and will lose to a player with only a pair of deuces. This is probably the most frequently misread hand in Omaha. (Naturally, a person with

the fourth jack in his hand can make four Jacks because any other card in his hand can act as the fifth card, or "kicker").

Omaha Hi/Lo

In [high-low split](#), each player, using these rules, thus makes a separate five-card high hand and five-card ace-to-five low hand (eight-high or lower to qualify), and the pot is split between the high and low (which may be the same player). To qualify for low, a player must be able to play an **8-7-6-5-4** or lower (this is why it is called "eight-or-better", or simply "Omaha/8"). A few casinos play with a 9-low qualifier instead, but this is rare. Each player can play any two of his four hole cards to make his high hand, and any two of his four hole cards to make his low hand.

The brief explanation above belies the complexity of the game, so a number of examples will be useful here to clarify it. The table below shows a five-card board of community cards at the end of play, and then lists for each player the initial private four-card hand dealt to him or her, and the best five-card high hand and low hand each player can play on showdown:

Board: 2S 5C 10H 7D 8C

Player	Hand	High	Low
Alan	AS 4S 5H KC	5H 5C AS 10H 8C	7D 5C 4S 2S AS
Brenda	AH 3H 10S 10C	10S 10C 10H 8C 7D	7D 5C 3H 2S AH
Chuck	7C 9C JS QS	JS 10H 9C 8C 7D	Cannot qualify
Daniel	4H 6H KS KD	8C 7D 6H 5C 4H	7D 6H 5C 4H 2S
Emily	AD 3D 6D 9H	9H 8C 7D 6D 5C	7D 5C 3D 2S AD

In the deal above, Chuck wins the high-hand half of the pot with his **J-high** straight, and Brenda and Emily split the low half (getting a quarter of the pot each) with **7-5-3-2-A**.

Some specific things to notice about Omaha eight-or-better hands are:

- In order for *anyone* to qualify low, there must be at least three cards of differing ranks **8** or below on the board. For example, a board of **K-8-J-7-5** makes low possible (the best low hand would be **A-2**, followed by **A-3**, **2-3**, etc.) A board of **K-8-J-8-5**, however, cannot make any qualifying low (the best low hand possible would be **J-8-5-2-A**, which doesn't qualify). Statistically, around 60% of the time a low hand is possible.
- Low hands often tie, and high straights occasionally tie as well. It is possible to win as little as a 14th of a pot (though this is extraordinarily rare). Winning a quarter of the pot is quite common, and is called "getting quartered". One dangerous aspect of playing for the low pot is the concept of '[counterfeiting](#)'. To illustrate, if a player has, for example, **2-3** and two other cards in his hand and the flop is **A-6-7**, that player has flopped the 'nut low'. However, if either a **2** or a **3** hit the board on the turn or the river, the hand is 'counterfeited' and the nut low hand is lost (the player still has a much weaker low hand however). This is why there is significant extra value in possessing the 'protected' nut low. To

illustrate this, if the player has **2-3-4** in his hand his low is protected, i.e. if a **2** or **3** hits the board he still has the lowest possible hand. To lose the nut low in this case both a **2** and a **3** would have to hit the board on the turn and the river, an unlikely possibility. For similar reasons it is significantly better to possess the protected nut low draw over the low draw. For example, this could be having **A-2-3** with a flop of **7-8-9-Q**; any low card below **7** on the turn or river gives the player the best low.

- When four or five low cards appear on the board, it can become very difficult to read the low hands properly. For example with a board of **2D 6H AC 5C 8S**, the hand **2H 4S 5S KD** is playing a **6-5-4-2-A** (either his **2-4** with the board's **A-5-6**, or his **4-5** with the board's **A-2-6**--either way makes the same hand). In this situation he is often said to be playing his "live" **4**, that is, his **4**, plus some other low card that matches the board but still makes a low because the one on the board isn't needed. A player with **3S 5S 10H JD** is playing a "live" **3**, for a low of **6-5-3-2-A**, which makes a better low. However, a player with **3C 7D QD QS** can only play **7-5-3-2-A** low; even though he has a "live" **3**, he must play two low cards from his hand, and so he must play his **7-3**, and cannot make a **6-high** low hand.
- Starting hands with three or four cards of one rank are *very* bad. In fact, the worst possible hand in the game is **2S 2C 2H 2D**! Since the only possible combination of two cards from this hand is **2-2**, it is impossible to make low; since no deuce remains to appear on the board, it will be impossible to make three deuces or deuces full, and anyone with any matching card to the board will make a higher pair. Likewise, starting with four cards of one suit makes it *less* likely that you will be able to make a flush. Starting with four different suits yields no chance for a flush, and starting with four disconnected cards reduces straight possibilities. Computer analysis of the best starting hands has proven that the best starting hand for Omaha is **A,A,K,K** with both Ks suited to the As. For the Hi-Lo variation, the most valuable starting holding is **A-2** (suited), **A-3** (suited).
- Hands to avoid tend to contain mainly middle ranked cards, which are of little use for any low splits and which tend to generate lower pairs and sets, weaker flushes and lower straights and can be very expensive.
- Low hand ranks from best to worst: 5432A ('[the wheel](#)'), 6432A, 6532A, 6542A, etc., 87654; see also [ace-to-five low](#)

Pot Limit Omaha

Pot Limit Omaha (also called PLO) is popular in Europe, online, and in high-stakes "mixed games" played in some American casinos. It is more often played high only, but can also be played high low. Even more so than Limit Omaha High Low, PLO is a game of drawing, if you are drawing, to the nut hand. For example, second best flushes and straights can be, and frequently are, beaten. Furthermore, because of the exponential growth of the pot size in pot limit play, seeing one of these hands to the end can be very expensive.

Redraws

A great hand to have in PLO is the nuts with a redraw. For example, if the board is **QS JS TH**, and you have **AS KC QC QH**, then not only do you have the current nuts (your ace-king), but you also have a redraw with the two queens in your hand because if the board pairs, you will make queens full, or four queens. If your hand is **AS KS QC QH**, your hand is even better because you have flush and straight flush redraws as well. In fact, with the **QS JS TH** board, **AS KS QC QH** is approximately an 80-20 money favorite over a random hand containing ace-king.

Variations

Sometimes the high-low split game is played with a **9**-high qualifier instead of **8**-high. It can also be played with five cards dealt to each player instead of four. In that case, the same rules for making a hand apply: exactly two from the player's hand, and exactly three from the board.

In the game of **Courcheval**, popular in Europe, instead of betting on the initial four cards and then flopping three community cards for the second round, the first community card is dealt before the first betting round, so that each player has four private cards and the single community card on his first bet. Then two more community cards are dealt, and play proceeds exactly as in Omaha.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Texas hold 'em

Texas hold 'em (also **hold'em**, **holdem**) is the most popular of the [community card poker](#) games. It is also the most popular [poker variant](#) played in most casinos in the United States. Its [no-limit](#) betting form is used in the main event of the [World Series of Poker](#) (WSOP), as seen on ESPN, and the World Poker Tour, seen on The Travel Channel, and is widely regarded as the premier poker game.

Although it can theoretically be played by up to 22 players (or 23 if [burn cards](#) are not used), it is generally played with between 2 and 10 people. It is one of the most [positional](#) of all poker variants, since the order of betting is fixed throughout all betting rounds. Hold 'em is commonly played outside of the United States, but [seven-card stud](#), [Omaha hold 'em](#) and other games may be more popular in some places.

Origins

There is no precise information on where or when Texas hold 'em Poker was first played. According to legend, the earliest game played was in Robstown, Texas, in the early 1900s and it first came to Dallas, Texas in 1925. Texas hold 'em was introduced to Las Vegas by a group of Texan gamblers and card players, including Crandell Addington, Doyle

Brunson, and Amarillo Slim. [1] The game was later introduced to Europe by bookmakers Terry Rogers and Liam "The Gentleman" Flood.^[2]

Rules

The descriptions below assume a familiarity with the general [game play of poker](#), and with [poker hands](#). For a general introduction to these topics, see [Poker](#), [Poker hand](#), [Poker probability](#), and [Poker jargon](#).

Objective

Like most variants of poker, the objective of Texas hold 'em is to win [pots](#), where a pot is the sum of the money bet by oneself and other players in a hand. A pot is won either at the showdown by forming the best five card poker hand out of the seven cards available, or by betting to cause other players to fold and abandon their claim to the pot.

Betting structures

See the article on [betting](#) for a detailed explanation of betting in these variations of hold 'em.

Hold 'em is normally played using small and big [blind bets](#). Antes may be used in addition to blinds, particularly in later stages of [tournament play](#). A [dealer button](#) is used to represent the player in the dealer position; the dealer button rotates clockwise after each hand, changing the position of the dealer and blinds. The *small blind* is posted by the player to the left of the dealer and is usually equal to half of the big blind. The *big blind*, posted by the player to the left of the small blind, is equal to the minimum bet. In tournament poker, the blind/ante structure periodically increases as the tournament progresses. (In some cases, the small blind is some other fraction of a small bet, e.g. \$10 is a common small blind when the big blind is \$15. The *double-blind* structure described above is relatively recent; until the 1980s, a single-blind structure was most common.)

The three most common variations of hold 'em are *limit* hold 'em, *no-limit* hold 'em and *pot-limit* hold 'em. Limit hold 'em has historically been the most popular form of hold 'em found in casino [live action](#) games in the United States. In limit hold 'em, bets and raises during the first two rounds of betting (pre-flop and flop) must be equal to the big blind; this amount is called the *small bet*. In the next two rounds of betting (turn and river), bets and raises must be equal to twice the big blind; this amount is called the *big bet*. No-limit hold 'em is the form most commonly found in televised tournament poker and is the game played in the main event of the World Series of Poker. In no-limit hold 'em, players may bet or raise any amount over the minimum raise up to all of chips the player has at the table (called an all-in bet). In pot-limit hold 'em, the maximum raise is the current size of the pot.

Play of the hand

Play begins with each player being dealt two cards face down. These cards are the player's *hole* or *pocket cards*. These are the only cards each player will receive individually, and they will only (possibly) be revealed at the [showdown](#), making Texas hold 'em a [closed](#) poker game. The hand begins with a "pre-flop" betting round, beginning with the player to the left of the big blind (or the player to the left of the dealer, if no blinds are used) and continuing clockwise.

After the pre-flop betting round, assuming there remains at least two players taking part in the hand, the dealer deals a [flop](#), three face-up [community cards](#). The flop is followed by a second betting round. This and all subsequent betting rounds begin with the player to the dealer's left and continue clockwise.

After the flop betting round ends a single community card (called the [turn](#) or fourth street) is dealt, followed by a third betting round. A single community card (called the [river](#) or fifth street) is dealt, followed by a fourth betting round and the showdown, if necessary.

The showdown

If a player bets and all other players fold, then the remaining player is awarded the pot and is not required to show his hole cards. If two or more players remain after the final betting round, a showdown occurs. On the showdown, each player plays the best five-card hand he can make from the seven cards comprising his two hole cards and the board (the five community cards). A player may use both of his own two hole cards, only one, or none at all, to form his final five-card hand. If the five community cards form the player's best hand, then the player is said to be *playing the board* and can only hope to [split](#) the pot, since the other player can also use the same five cards to construct the same hand.

If the best hand is shared by more than one player (e.g. if no player is able to beat the board), then the pot is split equally amongst all remaining players, with any extra chips going to the person closest to the button in clockwise order. However, it is common for players to have closely-valued, but not identically ranked hands. In particular, kickers are often needed to break ties. Nevertheless, one must be careful in determining the best hand. The goal is to make the best five-card hand; if the hand involves fewer than five cards, such as two pair or three of a kind, then kickers are used to settle ties (see the second example below.) Straights sometimes split the pot.

The best possible hand given the five community cards is referred to as [the nuts](#). The lowest possible nuts is three Queens (this occurs with 2 3 7 8 Q on the board with no more than two cards of any one suit).

Examples

Sample showdown

Here's a sample showdown:

Board
 4♣ K♠ 4♥ 8♠ 7♠
 Bob Carol Ted Alice
 A♠ 4♦ A♠ 9♠ K♥ K♦ 5♦ 6♦

Each player plays the best 5 card hand they can make with the 7 cards available. They have:

Bob 4♣ 4♥ 4♦ A♠ K♠ Three 4s, A and K kickers
 Carol A♠ K♠ 9♠ 8♠ 7♠ A-high flush
 Ted K♠ K♥ K♦ 4♠ 4♥ Full house
 Alice 8♠ 7♠ 6♦ 5♦ 4♥ 8-high straight

In this case, Ted's full house is the best hand.

Sample hand

Here's a sample deal involving our four players. The players' individual hands will not be revealed until the showdown, to give a better sense of what happens during play:

Compulsory bets: Alice is the dealer. Bob, to Alice's left, posts a small blind of \$1, and Carol posts a big blind of \$2.

Pre-flop: Alice deals two hole cards face down to each player, beginning with Bob and ending with herself. Ted must act first because he is the first player after the big blind. He cannot check, since the \$2 big blind plays as a bet, so he folds. Alice calls the \$2. Bob adds an additional \$1 to his \$1 small blind to call the \$2 total. Carol's blind is "live" (see [blind](#)), so she has the *option* to raise here, but she checks instead, ending the first betting round. The pot now contains \$6, \$2 from each of three players.

Flop: Alice now deals the flop of three face-up community cards, 9C KC 3H. On this round, as on all subsequent rounds, the player on the dealer's left begins the betting. In this case it is Bob who checks. Carol opens for \$2, Ted has already folded and Alice raises another \$2, making the total bet now facing Bob \$4. He calls (puts in \$4, \$2 to match Carol's initial bet and \$2 to match Alice's raise). Carol calls as well, putting in her \$2. The pot now contains \$18, \$6 from the last round and \$4 from three players this round.

Turn: Alice now deals the turn card face up. It is the 5S. Bob checks, Carol checks, and Alice checks; the turn has been *checked around*. The pot still contains \$18.

River: Alice deals the final river card, the 9D, making the final board 9C KC 3H 5S 9D. Bob bets \$4, Carol calls, and Alice folds (Alice's holding was AC 7C; she was hoping the river card would be a club to make her a flush).

Showdown: Bob shows his hand of QS 9H, so the best five-card hand he can make is 9C 9D 9H KC QS, for three 9's, with a King and a Queen as kickers. Carol shows her cards of KS

JH, making her final hand **KC KS 9C 9D JH** for two pair, Kings and 9's, with a Jack kicker. Bob wins the showdown and the \$26 pot.

Kickers and ranks

The following is another situation which illustrates the importance of breaking ties with kickers and card ranks, as well as the use of the five-card rule. After the turn, the board and players' hole cards are as follows (though none of the players know each other's hole cards):

Board (after the turn)

8S QC 8H 4C

Bob Carol Ted Alice

KH QS QH 10D JC 2C 10C 9C

At the moment, Bob is in the lead with a hand of **QS QC 8S 8H KH**, making two pair, Queens and 8's, with King kicker. This beats Carol's hand of **QH QC 8S 8H 10D** by virtue of his King kicker. Both Alice and Ted are hoping the final card is a club, which will make them both a flush, but in that case, Ted would have the higher flush and win the showdown. For example, if the final card was the **7C**, Ted's flush would be **Q-J-7-4-2**, while Alice's would be **Q-10-9-7-4**. Alice could still win, though, if the final card were the **JD**, as that would give her a Queen-high straight. On this deal, however, the final card was the **AS**, which didn't help either of them. Bob and Carol still each have two pair, but notice what happened: both of them are now entitled to play the final Ace as their fifth card, making their hands both two pair, Queens and 8's, with an Ace kicker. Bob's King no longer plays, because the Ace on the board plays as the fifth card in both hands, and a hand is only composed of five cards. They therefore split the pot.

Starting hand terminology and notation

Main article: [Texas hold 'em hands](#)

There are $(52 \times 51)/2 = 1,326$ distinct possible combinations of two hole cards from a standard 52-card deck. However, since suits are only relevant for flushes, many of these hands are indistinguishable from the point of view of pre-flop strategy. In fact, considering suits to be equivalent unless both cards are the same suit, there are precisely 169 distinct possible starting hands in hold 'em.^[3]

As an example, although **JH JC** and **JD JS** are distinct combinations of hole cards, they are indistinguishable as starting hands. Any starting hand comprising two Jacks is called [pocket jacks](#) and is denoted JJ. Similarly, any starting hand comprised of two Aces is called *pocket Aces* and is denoted AA, and any starting hand comprised of two 7's is called *pocket sevens* and is denoted 77. Each of these starting hands is called a *pocket pair* or a *wired pair*.

The starting hands which are not pocket pairs fall into two classes – the *suited* hands and the *unsuited* hands. An example of a suited hand is **8S 7S**. Any starting hand comprised of an 8 and a 7 of the same suit is called *8-7 suited* and is denoted 87s, where "s" is an

abbreviation for "suited". An example of an unsuited hands is **QC 9D**. Any starting hand comprised of a Queen and a 9 of different suits is called *queen-nine offsuit* and is denoted Q9 (or sometimes Q9o, where "o" is an abbreviation for "offsuit"). Remember, an "s" always denotes a suited starting hand, while the absence of an "s" always denotes an offsuit starting hand.

In almost all poker writing, the rank of 10 is abbreviated with the letter "T", so that all the ranks can be written with a single character, unless cards are featured pictorially when "10" is often used.

Consecutive cards of the same suit are called *suited connectors*. Many starting hands have colloquial names. See also [List of slang names for poker hands](#).

Strategy

See [Poker strategy](#) for a more detailed discussion of general poker strategy

Most poker authors recommend a tight-[aggressive](#) approach to playing Texas hold 'em. This strategy involves playing relatively few hands (tight), but betting and raising often with those that one does play (aggressive). Although this strategy is often recommended, some professional players successfully employ other strategies as well.^[4] While most poker authors focus on playing primarily premium starting hands, some authors claim that the importance of starting hands is overstated.^[5]

Almost all authors agree that [position](#) is an important element of Texas hold 'em strategy. Players who act later have more information than players who act earlier. As a result, players typically play fewer hands from early positions than later positions.

The no-limit and fixed limit versions of hold 'em are strategically very different. Doyle Brunson states, "In fact, the games are so different that there are **not** many players who rank with the best in both types of hold 'em. Many no-limit players have difficulty *gearing down* for limit, while limit players often lack the courage and 'feel' necessary to excel at no-limit."^[6] Because the size of bets are restricted in limit games, the ability to [bluff](#) is somewhat curtailed. Since one is not (usually) risking all of one's chips in limit poker, players are sometimes advised to take more chances.^[7]

Lower stakes limit games also exhibit different properties than higher stakes games. Small stakes games often involve more players in each hand and can vary from extremely passive (little raising and betting) to extremely aggressive (many raises). The difference of small stakes games have resulted in several books dedicated to only those games.^[8]

In popular culture

In 1998, the movie *Rounders* starring Matt Damon and Edward Norton gave moviegoers a romantic view of poker as a way of life. Texas hold 'em was the main game played during the movie and the no-limit variety was described, following Doyle Brunson, as the "Cadillac of Poker". There was also a clip of the classic showdown between Johnny Chan and Erik Seidel from the 1988 World Series of Poker incorporated into the film.

CommanderBond.net reports that the centerpiece card game in the next James Bond film, *Casino Royale*, will be no-limit Texas hold 'em instead of Baccarat as in the original Ian Fleming novel.^[9]

Spectator sport

Hold 'em first caught the public eye as a spectator sport in the United Kingdom with the Late Night Poker TV show in 1999. The popularity of the show led to lipstick cameras also being used for American poker programs.

In 2003, hold 'em exploded in popularity as a spectator sport in the United States. This was due to several factors, including the introduction of lipstick cameras that allowed the television audience to see the players' hidden cards. ESPN's coverage of the 2003 World Series of Poker featured the unexpected victory of Internet player Chris Moneymaker, an amateur player who gained admission to the tournament by winning a series of online tournaments. Moneymaker's victory initiated a sudden surge of interest in the WSOP, based on the egalitarian idea that anyone – even a rank novice – can become a world champion.

In 2003, there were 839 entrants in the WSOP Main Event. In 2004, that number tripled. The crowning of the 2004 WSOP champion, Greg "Fossilman" Raymer, a patent attorney from Connecticut whose trademark holographic sunglasses have become legendary, further fueled the popularity of the event among amateur (and particularly internet) players. In the 2005 Main Event, an unprecedented 5,619 entrants vied for a first prize of \$7,500,000. The winner, Joseph Hachem of Australia, was a semi-professional player. The runner-up, Steve Dannenmann, an amateur from Maryland, opined that he was only "the fourth or fifth best player" in his regular home game.

Two additional hold 'em series debuted in 2003, the *World Poker Tour* and *Celebrity Poker Showdown*. All three of these shows are still currently in production and garner a large and loyal viewership.

With the ability to edit a tournament that lasts days into just a few hours, ESPN's *World Series of Poker* focuses on showing how various star players fared in each event. Key hands from throughout the many days of each event are shown, and similar, highly edited coverage of final tables is also provided.

The *World Poker Tour* does not offer general coverage of the multi-day poker tournaments. Instead, WPT covers only the action at the final table of each event. With aggressive play and increasing blinds and antes, the important action from a single table can easily be edited into a two hour episode. Although the tournament fate of fewer stars are chronicled this way, it allows the drama to build more naturally toward the final heads up showdown.

Celebrity Poker Showdown coverage is a single table like *World Poker Tour*, however, the players are much less skilled and are invited to participate instead of winning their way on.

Notes

1. ^ Brunson, Doyle (2005). *Doyle Brunson's Super System II*. Cardoza.
2. ^ McCloskey, Mick (June 22, 2005). Retrieved on May 19, 2006.
3. ^ Alspach, Brian (2005). Retrieved on May 19, 2006.

4. [^] Harrington, Dan and Bill Robertie (2004). *Harrington on Hold'em: Expert Strategy For No-Limit Tournaments; Volume I: Strategic Play*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685337.
 5. [^] Miller, Ed, David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth (2004). *Small Stakes Hold'em*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685329.
 6. [^] Brunson, Doyle (1978). *Super/System: A course in power poker*. B&G Publishing Company., emphasis in original
 7. [^] Ibid
 8. [^] Miller, Sklansky, and Malmuth op cit. and Jones, Lee (1994). *Winning Low-Limit Hold-em*. Conjelco. ISBN 1886070156.
 9. [^] Weston, Matt (2005). Retrieved on May 19, 2006.
- [Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#) | [Texas hold 'em hands](#) | [Texas Hold'em Bonus Poker](#) | [WinHoldEm](#)

Poker probability (Texas hold 'em)

In [poker](#), the **probability** of many events can be determined by direct calculation. This article discusses how to compute the probabilities for many commonly occurring events in the game of [Texas hold 'em](#) and provides some probabilities and odds^u for specific situations. In most cases, the probabilities and odds are approximations due to rounding.

When calculating probabilities for a card game such as Texas Hold 'em, there are two basic approaches.

1. Determine the number of outcomes that satisfy the condition being evaluated and divide this by the total number of possible outcomes. For example, there are six outcomes (ignoring order) for being dealt a pair of aces in Hold' em: {**AS**, **AH**}, {**AS**, **AD**}, {**AS**, **AC**}, {**AH**, **AD**}, {**AH**, **AC**}, and {**AD**, **AC**}. There are 52 ways to pick the first card and 51 ways to pick the second card and two ways to order the two cards yielding $52 \times 51 \div 2 = 1,326$ possible outcomes of being dealt two cards (also ignoring order). This gives a probability of being dealt two aces of $6/1326 = 1/221$.
2. Use conditional probabilities, or in more complex situations, a decision graph. There are 4 ways to be dealt an ace out of 52 choices for the first card resulting in a probability of $4/52 = 1/13$. There are 3 ways of getting dealt an ace out of 51 choices on the second card after being dealt an ace on the first card for a probability of $3/51 = 1/17$. The conditional probability of getting dealt two aces is the product of the two probabilities: $1/13 \times 1/17 = 1/221$. (Note that in this case the total is not divided by 2 ways of ordering the cards because both cards must be an ace—reordering would still require the first and second cards to be an ace, so there is only one way to order the two cards.)

Often, the key to determining probability is selecting the best approach for a given problem. This article uses both of these approaches.

Starting hands

The probability of being dealt various starting [hands](#) can be explicitly calculated. In Texas Hold 'em, a player is dealt two down (or *hole*) cards. The first card can be any one of 52 [playing cards](#) in the deck and the second card can be any one of the 51 remaining cards. This gives $52 \times 51 \div 2 = 1,326$ possible starting hand combinations. (Since the order of the cards is not significant, the 2,652 combinations are divided by the 2 ways of ordering two cards.) Alternately, the number of possible starting hands is represented as the binomial coefficient

$$\binom{52}{2} = 1,326$$

which is the number of possible combinations of choosing 2 cards from a deck of 52 playing cards.

The 1,326 starting hands can be reduced for purposes of determining the probability of starting hands for Hold 'em—since suits have no relative value in poker, many of these hands are identical in value before the [flop](#). The only factors determining the strength of a starting hand are the ranks of the cards and whether the cards share the same suit. Of the 1,326 combinations, there are 169 distinct starting hands grouped into three *shapes*: 13 *pocket pairs* (paired hole cards), $13 \times 12 \div 2 = 78$ *suited hands* and 78 *unsuited hands*; $13 + 78 + 78 = 169$. The relative probability of being dealt a hand of each given shape is different. The following shows the probabilities and odds of being dealt each type of starting hand.

Hand shape	Number of hands	Permutations for each hand	Combinations	Dealt specific hand		Dealt any hand	
				Probability	Odds	Probability	Odds
Pocket pair	13	$\binom{4}{2} = 6$	$13 \times 6 = 78$	$\frac{6}{1326} \approx 0.00453$	220 : 1	$\frac{78}{1326} \approx 0.0588$	16 : 1
Suited cards	78	$\binom{4}{1} = 4$	$78 \times 4 = 312$	$\frac{4}{1326} \approx 0.00302$	331 : 1	$\frac{312}{1326} \approx 0.2353$	3.25 : 1
Unsuited cards	78	$\binom{4}{1} \binom{3}{1} = 12$	$78 \times 12 = 936$	$\frac{12}{1326} \approx 0.00905$	110 : 1	$\frac{936}{1326} \approx 0.7059$	0.417 : 1

Here are the probabilities and odds of being dealt various other types of starting hands.

Hand	Probability	Odds
AKs (or any specific suited cards)	0.00302	331 : 1
AA (or any specific pair)	0.00453	220 : 1
AKs, KQs, QJs, or JTs	0.0121	81.9 : 1
AK (or any specific non-pair)	0.0121	81.9 : 1
AA, KK, or QQ	0.0136	72.7 : 1
Suited cards, J or better	0.0181	54.3 : 1
AA, KK, QQ, JJ, or TT	0.0226	43.2 : 1
Suited cards, T or better	0.0302	32.2 : 1
Suited connectors	0.0392	24.5 : 1
Connected cards, T or better	0.0483	19.7 : 1
Any 2 cards with rank at least Q	0.0498	19.1 : 1
Any 2 cards with rank at least J	0.0905	10.1 : 1
Any 2 cards with rank at least T	0.143	5.98 : 1
Connected cards (cards of consecutive rank)	0.157	5.38 : 1
Any 2 cards with rank at least 9	0.208	3.81 : 1
Not connected nor suited, at least one 2-9	0.534	0.873 : 1

Starting hands heads up

For any given starting hand, there are $50 \times 49 \div 2 = 1,225$ hands that an opponent can have before the flop. (After the flop, the number of possible hands an opponent can have is reduced by the three [community cards](#) revealed on the flop to $47 \times 46 \div 2 = 1,081$ hands.) Therefore, there are

$$\binom{52}{2} \binom{50}{2} \div 2 = 812,175$$

possible head-to-head match ups in Hold 'em. (The number of total number of match ups is divided by the two ways that two hands can be distributed between two players to give the number of unique match ups.) However, since there are only 169 distinct starting hands, there are $169 \times 1,225 = 207,025$ distinct head-to-head match ups.^[2]

It is useful and interesting to know how two starting hands compete against each other heads up before the flop. In other words, we assume that neither hand will fold, and we will see a showdown. This situation occurs quite often in no limit and tournament play. Also, studying these odds helps to demonstrate the concept of [hand domination](#), which is important in all community card games.

This problem is considerably more complicated than determining the frequency of dealt hands. To see why, note that given both hands, there are 48 remaining unseen cards. Out of these 48 cards, we can choose any 5 to make a board. Thus, there are

$$\binom{48}{5} = 1,712,304$$

possible boards that may fall. In addition to determining the precise number of boards that give a win to each player, we also must take into account boards which split the pot, and split the number of these boards between the players.

The problem is trivial for computers to solve by brute force search; there are many software programs available that will compute the odds in seconds. A somewhat less trivial exercise is an exhaustive analysis of all of the head-to-head match ups in Texas Hold 'em, which requires evaluating each possible board for each distinct head-to-head match up, or $1,712,304 \times 207,025 = 354,489,735,600$ (H354 billion) results.^[2]

Head-to-head starting hand matchups

When comparing two starting hands, the *head-to-head probability* describes the likelihood of one hand beating the other after all of the cards have come out. Head-to-head probabilities vary slightly for each particular distinct starting hand matchup, but the approximate average probabilities, as given by Dan Harrington in [*Harrington on Hold'em*](#) [p.125], are summarized in the following table.

Favorite-to-underdog matchup	Probability	Odds for
Pair vs. 2 undercards	0.83	4.9 : 1
Pair vs. lower pair	0.82	4.5 : 1
Pair vs. 1 overcard, 1 undercard	0.71	2.5 : 1
2 overcards vs. 2 undercards	0.63	1.7 : 1
Pair vs. 2 overcards	0.55	1.2 : 1

These odds are general approximations only derived from averaging all of the hand matchups in each category. The actual head-to-head probabilities for any two starting hands vary depending on a number of factors, including:

- Suited or unsuited starting hands;
- Shared suits between starting hands;
- Connectedness of non-pair starting hands;
- Proximity of card ranks between the starting hands (lowering straight potential);
- Proximity of card ranks toward A or 2 (lowering straight potential);
- Possibility of split pot.

For example, **AS AC** vs. **KS QC** is 87.65% to win (0.49% to split), but **AS AC** vs. **7D 6D** is 76.81% to win (0.32% to split).

The mathematics for computing all of the possible matchups is quite complex. However, a computer program can perform a brute force evaluation of the 1,712,304 possible boards for any given pair of starting hands in seconds.

Starting hands against multiple opponents

When facing two opponents, for any given starting hand the number of possible combinations of hands the opponents can have is

$$\binom{50}{2} \binom{48}{2} = 1,381,800$$

hands. For calculating probabilities we can ignore the distinction between the two opponents holding **AS JH** and **8H 8C** and the opponents holding **8H 8C** and **AS JH**. The number of ways that hands can be distributed between n opponents is $n!$ (pronounced n factorial). So the number of unique hand combinations H against two opponents is

$$H = \binom{50}{2} \binom{48}{2} \div 2! = 690,900,$$

and against three opponents is

$$H = \binom{50}{2} \binom{48}{2} \binom{46}{2} \div 3! = 238,360,500,$$

and against n opponents is

$$H = \prod_{k=1}^n \binom{50-2k}{2} \div k, \quad \text{or alternately} \quad H = \binom{50}{2n} \times (2n-1)!!,$$

where $(2n-1)!!$ ($!!$ is the double factorial operator) is the number of ways to distribute $2n$ cards between n hands of two cards each. The following table shows the number of hand combinations for up to nine opponents.

Opponents	Number of possible hand combinations
1	1,225
2	690,900
3	238,360,500
4	56,372,258,250
5	$\approx 9.7073 \times 10^{12}$ (more than 9.7 trillion)
6	$\approx 1.2620 \times 10^{15}$ (more than 1.2 quadrillion)
7	$\approx 1.2674 \times 10^{17}$ (more than 126 quadrillion)
8	$\approx 9.9804 \times 10^{18}$ (almost 10 quintillion)
9	$\approx 6.2211 \times 10^{20}$ (more than 622 quintillion)

An exhaustive analysis of all of the match ups in Texas Hold 'em of a player against nine opponents requires evaluating each possible board for each distinct starting hand against each possible combination of hands held by nine opponents, which is

$$169 \times \binom{50}{18} \times 17!! \times \binom{32}{5} \approx 2.117 \times 10^{28}$$

(more than 21 octillion.)

If you were able to evaluate one trillion (10^{12}) combinations every second, it would take over 670 million years to evaluate all of the hand/board combinations. While it is possible to significantly reduce the total number of combinations by pruning combinations with identical properties, the total number of situations is still well beyond the number that can be evaluated by brute force. For this reason, most software programs compute probabilities and expected values for Hold 'em poker hands against multiple opponents by simulating the play of thousands or even millions of hands to determine statistical probabilities.

Dominated hands

When evaluating a hand before the flop, it's useful to have some idea of how likely the hand is *dominated*. A dominated hand is a hand that is beaten by another hand (the *dominant* hand) and is extremely unlikely to win against it. Often the dominated hand has only a single card rank that can improve the dominated hand to beat the dominant hand (not counting straights and flushes.) For example, **KJ** is dominated by **KQ**—both hands share the king and the queen kicker is beating the jack kicker. Barring a straight or flush, the **KJ** will need a jack on the board to improve against the **KQ** (and will still be losing if a queen comes on the board also.) A pocket pair is dominated by a pocket pair of higher rank.

Pocket pairs

Barring a miracle straight or flush, a pocket pair needs to make three of a kind to beat a higher pocket pair. See the section "After the flop" for the odds of a pocket pair improving to three of a kind.

To calculate the probability that another player has a higher pocket pair, first consider the case against a single opponent. The probability that a single opponent has a higher pair can be stated as the probability that the first card dealt to the opponent is a higher rank than the pocket pair and the second card is the same rank as the first. Where r is the rank of the pocket pair (assigning values from 2–10 and J–A = 11–14), there are $(14 - r) \times 4$ cards of higher rank. Subtracting the two cards for the pocket pair leaves 50 cards in the deck. After the first card is dealt to the player there are 49 cards left, 3 of which are the same rank as the first. So the probability of a single opponent being dealt a higher pocket pair is

$$P = \frac{(14 - r) \times 4}{50} \times \frac{3}{49} = \frac{84 - 6r}{1225}.$$

The following approach extends this equation to calculate the probability that one or more other players has a higher pocket pair.

1. Multiply the base probability for a single player for a given rank of pocket pairs by the number of opponents in the hand;
2. Subtract the adjusted probability that more than one opponent has a higher pocket pair. (This is necessary because this probability effectively gets added to the calculation multiple times when multiplying the single player result.)

Where n is the number of other players still in the hand and P_{ma} is the adjusted probability that multiple opponents have higher pocket pairs, then the probability that at least one of them has a higher pocket pair is

$$P = \left(\frac{84 - 6r}{1225} \right) \times n - P_{ma}.$$

The calculation for P_{ma} depends on the rank of the player's pocket pair, but can be generalized as

$$P_{ma} = P_2 + 2P_3 + \dots + (n-1)P_n,$$

where P_2 is the probability that exactly two players have a higher pair, P_3 is the probability that exactly three players have a higher pair, etc. As a practical matter, even with pocket 2s against 9 opponents, $P_4 < 0.0015$ and $P_5 < 0.00009$, so just calculating P_2 and P_3 gives an adequately precise result.

The following table shows the probability that before the flop another player has a larger pocket pair when there are one to nine other players in the hand.

Probability of facing a larger pair when holding	Against 1	Against 2	Against 3	Against 4	Against 5	Against 6	Against 7	Against 8	Against 9
KK	0.0049	0.0098	0.0147	0.0196	0.0244	0.0293	0.0342	0.0391	0.0439
QQ	0.0098	0.0195	0.0292	0.0388	0.0484	0.0579	0.0673	0.0766	0.0859
JJ	0.0147	0.0292	0.0436	0.0577	0.0717	0.0856	0.0992	0.1127	0.1259
TT	0.0196	0.0389	0.0578	0.0764	0.0946	0.1124	0.1299	0.1470	0.1637
99	0.0245	0.0484	0.0718	0.0946	0.1168	0.1384	0.1593	0.1795	0.1990
88	0.0294	0.0580	0.0857	0.1125	0.1384	0.1634	0.1873	0.2101	0.2318
77	0.0343	0.0674	0.0994	0.1301	0.1595	0.1874	0.2138	0.2387	0.2619
66	0.0392	0.0769	0.1130	0.1473	0.1799	0.2104	0.2389	0.2651	0.2890
55	0.0441	0.0862	0.1263	0.1642	0.1996	0.2324	0.2623	0.2892	0.3129
44	0.0490	0.0956	0.1395	0.1806	0.2186	0.2532	0.2841	0.3109	0.3334
33	0.0539	0.1048	0.1526	0.1967	0.2370	0.2729	0.3040	0.3300	0.3503
22	0.0588	0.1141	0.1654	0.2124	0.2546	0.2914	0.3222	0.3464	0.3633

The following table gives the probability that a hand is facing two or more larger pairs before the flop. From the previous equations, the probability P_m is computed as

$$P_m = P_2 + P_3 + \dots + P_n.$$

Probability of facing multiple larger pairs when holding	Against 2	Against 3	Against 4	Against 5	Against 6	Against 7	Against 8	Against 9
KK	< 0.00001	0.00001	0.00003	0.00004	0.00007	0.00009	0.00012	0.00016
QQ	0.00006	0.00018	0.00037	0.00061	0.00091	0.00128	0.00171	0.00220
JJ	0.00017	0.00051	0.00102	0.00171	0.00257	0.00360	0.00482	0.00621
TT	0.00033	0.00099	0.00200	0.00335	0.00504	0.00709	0.00950	0.01226
99	0.00054	0.00164	0.00330	0.00553	0.00836	0.01177	0.01580	0.02045
88	0.00081	0.00244	0.00493	0.00828	0.01253	0.01769	0.02378	0.03084
77	0.00112	0.00341	0.00689	0.01160	0.01758	0.02487	0.03351	0.04353
66	0.00149	0.00454	0.00918	0.01550	0.02353	0.03335	0.04503	0.05861
55	0.00191	0.00583	0.01182	0.01998	0.03040	0.04318	0.05840	0.07619
44	0.00239	0.00728	0.01480	0.02506	0.03821	0.05438	0.07371	0.09635
33	0.00291	0.00890	0.01812	0.03075	0.04698	0.06699	0.09099	0.11919
22	0.00349	0.01068	0.02180	0.03706	0.05673	0.08107	0.11034	0.14484

From a practical perspective, however, the odds of out drawing a single pocket pair or multiple pocket pairs are not much different. In both cases the large majority of winning hands require one of the remaining two cards needed to make [three of a kind](#).

Hands with one ace

When holding a single ace (referred to as **Ax**), it is useful to know how likely it is that another player has a *better ace*—an ace with a higher second card. The weaker ace is dominated by the better ace. The probability that a single opponent has a better ace is the probability that they have either **AA** or **Ax** where *x* is a rank other than ace that is higher than the player's second card. When holding **Ax**, the probability that the other player has **AA** is $3/50 \times 2/49 \sim 0.00245$. Where *x* is the rank 2–K of the second card (assigning values from 2–10 and J–K = 11–13) the probability that a single opponent has a better ace is calculated by the formula

$$P = \left(\frac{3}{50} \times \frac{2}{49} \right) + \left(\frac{3}{50} \times \frac{(13-x) \times 4}{49} \times 2 \right) = \frac{3}{1225} + \frac{12 \times (13-x)}{1225} = \frac{159 - 12x}{1225}.$$

The probability $\frac{3}{50} \times \frac{(13-x) \times 4}{49}$ of a player having **Ay**, where *y* is a rank such that $x < y \leq K$, is multiplied by the two ways to order the cards **A** and *y* in the hand.

The flop

The value of a starting hand can change dramatically after the flop. Regardless of initial strength, any hand can flop the [nuts](#)—for example, if the flop comes with three 2s, any hand holding the fourth 2 has the nuts. Conversely, the flop can undermine the perceived strength of any hand—**AC AH** would not be happy to see **8S 9S 10S** on the flop because of the straight and flush possibilities.

There are

$$\binom{50}{3} = 19,600$$

possible flops for any given starting hand. By the turn the total number of combinations has increased to

$$\binom{50}{4} = 230,300$$

and on the river there are

$$\binom{50}{5} = 2,118,760$$

possible boards to go with the hand.

The following are some general probabilities about what can occur on the board. These assume a "random" starting hand for the player.

Board consisting of	Making on flop		Making by turn		Making by river	
	Prob.	Odds	Prob.	Odds	Prob.	Odds
Three or more of same suit	0.05177	18.3 : 1	0.13522	6.40 : 1	0.23589	3.24 : 1
Four or more of same suit			0.01056	93.7 : 1	0.03394	28.5 : 1
Rainbow flop (all different suits)	0.39765	1.51 : 1	0.10550	8.48 : 1		
Three cards of consecutive rank (but not four consecutive)	0.03475	27.8 : 1	0.11820	7.46 : 1	0.25068	2.99 : 1
Four cards to a straight (but not five)			0.03877	24.8 : 1	0.18991	4.27 : 1
Three or more cards of consecutive rank and same suit	0.00217	459 : 1	0.00869	114 : 1	0.02172	45.0 : 1
Three of a kind (but not a full house or four of a kind)	0.00235	424 : 1	0.00935	106 : 1	0.02128	46 : 1
A pair (but not two pair or three or four of a kind)	0.16941	4.90 : 1	0.30417	2.29 : 1	0.42450	1.36 : 1
Two pair (but not a full house)			0.01037	95.4 : 1	0.04716	20.2 : 1

An interesting fact to note from the table above is that more than 60% of the flops will have at least two of the same suit—you're likely to either be drawing to a flush or worried about one.

Flopping overcards when holding a pocket pair

It is also useful to look at the chances different starting hands have of either improving on the flop, or of weakening on the flop. One interesting circumstance concerns pocket pairs. When holding a pocket pair, overcards (cards of higher rank than the pair) weaken the hand because of the potential that an overcard has paired a card in an opponent's hand. The hand gets worse the more overcards there are on the board and the more opponents that are in the hand because the probability that one of the overcards has paired a hole

card increases. To calculate the probability of no overcard, take the total number of outcomes without an overcard divided by the total number of outcomes.

Where x is the rank 3-K of the pocket pair (assigning values from 3-10 and J-K = 11-13), then the number of overcards is $(14 - x) \times 4$ and the number of cards of rank x or less is $50 - (14 - x) \times 4 = 4x - 6$. The number of outcomes without an overcard is the number of combinations that can be formed with the remaining cards, so the probability P of an overcard on the flop is

$$P = \frac{\binom{4x-6}{3}}{\binom{50}{3}},$$

and on the turn and river are

$$P = \frac{\binom{4x-6}{4}}{\binom{50}{4}} \text{ and } P = \frac{\binom{4x-6}{5}}{\binom{50}{5}}, \text{ respectively.}$$

The following table gives the probability that no overcards will come on the flop, turn and river, for each of the pocket pairs from 3 to K.

Holding pocket pair	Overcard on flop		Overcard by turn		Overcard by river	
	Prob.	Odds	Prob.	Odds	Prob.	Odds
KK	0.7745	0.29 : 1	0.7086	0.41 : 1	0.6470	0.55 : 1
QQ	0.5857	0.71 : 1	0.4860	1.06 : 1	0.4015	1.49 : 1
JJ	0.4304	1.32 : 1	0.3205	2.12 : 1	0.2369	3.22 : 1
TT	0.3053	2.28 : 1	0.2014	3.97 : 1	0.1313	6.61 : 1
99	0.2071	3.83 : 1	0.1190	7.40 : 1	0.0673	13.87 : 1
88	0.1327	6.54 : 1	0.0649	14.40 : 1	0.0310	31.21 : 1
77	0.0786	11.73 : 1	0.0318	30.48 : 1	0.0124	79.46 : 1
66	0.0416	23.02 : 1	0.0133	74.26 : 1	0.0040	246.29 : 1
55	0.0186	52.85 : 1	0.0043	229.07 : 1	0.0009	1057.32 : 1
44	0.0061	162.33 : 1	0.0009	1095.67 : 1	0.0001	8406.78 : 1
33	0.0010	979.00 : 1	0.0001	15352.33 : 1	0.0000	353125.67 : 1

Notice that there is a better than 35% probability that an ace will come by the river if holding pocket kings, and with pocket queens, the odds are slightly in favor of an ace or a king coming by the turn, and a full 60% in favor of an overcard to the queen by the river. With pocket jacks, there's only a 43% chance that an overcard won't come on the flop and it's better than 3:1 that an overcard will come by the river.

After the flop

During play—that is, from the flop and onwards—drawing probabilities come down to a question of [outs](#). All situations which have the same number of outs have the same probability of winning. For example, an inside straight draw (e.g. 34 67 missing the 5 for a straight), and a full house draw (e.g. 66KK drawing for one of the pairs to become three-of-a-kind) are equivalent. Each can be satisfied by four cards—four 5s in the first case, and the other two 6s and other two kings in the second.

The probabilities of drawing these outs are easily calculated. At the flop there remain 47 unseen cards, so the probability is (outs ÷ 47). At the turn there are 46 unseen cards so the probability is (outs ÷ 46). The cumulative probability of making a hand on either the turn or river can be determined as the complement of the odds of *not* making the hand on the turn and not on the river. The probability of not drawing an out is (47 outs) ÷ 47 on the turn and (46 outs) ÷ 46 on the river; taking the complement of these conditional probabilities gives the probability of drawing the out by the river which is calculated by the formula

$$P = 1 - \left(\frac{47 - \text{outs}}{47} \times \frac{46 - \text{outs}}{46} \right).$$

For reference, the probability and odds for some of the more common numbers of outs are given here.

Likely drawing to	Outs	Make on turn		Make on river		Make on turn or river	
		Prob.	Odds	Prob.	Odds	Prob.	Odds
Inside straight flush , Four of a kind	1	0.0213	46.0 : 1	0.0217	45.0 : 1	0.0426	22.5 : 1
Open-ended straight flush , Three of a kind	2	0.0426	22.5 : 1	0.0435	22.0 : 1	0.0842	10.9 : 1
High pair	3	0.0638	14.7 : 1	0.0652	14.3 : 1	0.1249	7.01 : 1
Inside straight , Full house	4	0.0851	10.8 : 1	0.0870	10.5 : 1	0.1647	5.07 : 1
Three of a kind or two pair	5	0.1064	8.40 : 1	0.1087	8.20 : 1	0.2035	3.91 : 1
Either pair	6	0.1277	6.83 : 1	0.1304	6.67 : 1	0.2414	3.14 : 1
Full house or four of a kind , (see note) Inside straight or high pair	7	0.1489	5.71 : 1	0.1522	5.57 : 1	0.2784	2.59 : 1
Open-ended straight	8	0.1702	4.88 : 1	0.1739	4.75 : 1	0.3145	2.18 : 1
Flush	9	0.1915	4.22 : 1	0.1957	4.11 : 1	0.3497	1.86 : 1
Inside straight or pair	10	0.2128	3.70 : 1	0.2174	3.60 : 1	0.3839	1.60 : 1
Open-ended straight or high pair	11	0.2340	3.27 : 1	0.2391	3.18 : 1	0.4172	1.40 : 1
Inside straight or flush , Flush or high pair	12	0.2553	2.92 : 1	0.2609	2.83 : 1	0.4496	1.22 : 1
	13	0.2766	2.62 : 1	0.2826	2.54 : 1	0.4810	1.08 : 1
Open-ended straight or pair	14	0.2979	2.36 : 1	0.3043	2.29 : 1	0.5116	0.955 : 1
Open-ended straight or flush , Flush or pair , Inside straight , flush or top pair	15	0.3191	2.13 : 1	0.3261	2.07 : 1	0.5412	0.848 : 1
	16	0.3404	1.94 : 1	0.3478	1.88 : 1	0.5698	0.755 : 1
	17	0.3617	1.76 : 1	0.3696	1.71 : 1	0.5976	0.673 : 1
Inside straight or flush or pair , Open-ended straight , flush or high pair	18	0.3830	1.61 : 1	0.3913	1.56 : 1	0.6244	0.601 : 1
	19	0.4043	1.47 : 1	0.4130	1.42 : 1	0.6503	0.538 : 1
	20	0.4255	1.35 : 1	0.4348	1.30 : 1	0.6753	0.481 : 1
Open-ended straight , flush or pair	21	0.4468	1.24 : 1	0.4565	1.19 : 1	0.6994	0.430 : 1

- **Note:** When drawing to a full house or four of a kind with a pocket pair that has hit *trips* (three of a kind) on the flop, there are 6 outs to get a full house by pairing the board and one out to make four of a kind. This means that if the turn does not pair the board or make four of a kind, there will be 3 additional outs on the river, for a total of 10, to pair the turn card and make a full house. This makes the probability of drawing to a full house or four of a kind on the turn or river 0.334 and the odds are 1.99 : 1. This makes drawing to a full house or four of a kind by the river about 8½ outs.

It is worth noting in the preceding table that if a player doesn't fold before the river, a hand with at least 14 outs after the flop has a better than 50% chance to catch one of its outs by the river. With 20 or more outs, a hand is a better than 2 : 1 favorite to catch at least one out by the river.

See the article on [pot odds](#) for examples of how these probabilities might be used in gameplay decisions.

Example of drawing outs

The **unseen cards principle** states that to calculate the probability (from the point of view of a player about to act) that the next card dealt will be among a certain set, he must divide the number of cards in that set by the number of cards he has not seen, regardless of where those cards are. For example, a player playing [five-card draw](#) who holds **5-6-7-8-K** wants to discard the **K** hoping to draw a **4** or **9** to complete a straight. He will calculate his probability of success on the turn as $8 \div 47$: 4 **4s** and 4 **9s** give 8 outs, and 52 cards minus the 5 he has already seen make 47. The fact that some of those unseen cards have already been dealt to other players is irrelevant, because he has no information about where the desired cards are, and must act based only upon information he does have. In a game among experts, it sometimes is possible to deduce what an opponent is probably holding, and adjust your odds computation. In a [stud poker](#) or [community card poker](#) game, cards that the player has seen because they are dealt face up *are* subtracted from the unseen card count (and from the set of desired cards as well if they are out of play).

Runner-runner outs

Some outs for a hand require drawing an out on both the turn and the river—making two consecutive outs is called a *runner-runner*. Examples would be needing two cards to make a straight, flush, or three or four of a kind. Runner-runner outs can either draw from a common set of outs or from disjoint sets of outs. Two disjoint outs can either be conditional or independent events.

Common outs

Drawing to a flush is an example of drawing from a common set of outs. Both the turn and river need to be the same suit, so both outs are coming from a common set of outs—the set of remaining cards of the desired suit. After the flop, if x is the number of common outs, the probability P of drawing runner-runner outs is

$$P = \frac{x}{47} \times \frac{x-1}{46}.$$

Since a flush would have 10 outs, the probability of a runner-runner flush draw is $\frac{10}{47} \times \frac{9}{46} = \frac{90}{2162} \approx 0.04163$. Other examples of runner-runner draws from a common set of outs are drawing to three or four of a kind. When counting outs, it is convenient to convert runner-runner outs to "normal" outs (see "After the flop".) A runner-runner flush draw is about the equivalent of one "normal" out.

The following table shows the probability and odds of making a runner-runner from a common set of outs and the equivalent normal outs.

Likely drawing to	Common outs	Probability	Odds	Equivalent outs
Four of a kind (with pair) Inside-only straight flush	2	0.00093	1080 : 1	0.02
Three of a kind (with no pair)	3	0.00278	359 : 1	0.07
	4	0.00556	179 : 1	0.13
	5	0.00925	107 : 1	0.22
Two pair or three of a kind (with no pair)	6	0.01388	71.1 : 1	0.33
	7	0.01943	50.5 : 1	0.46
	8	0.02590	37.6 : 1	0.61
	9	0.03330	29.0 : 1	0.78
Flush	10	0.04163	23.0 : 1	0.98

Disjoint outs

Two outs are disjoint when there are no common cards between the set of cards needed for the first out and the set of cards needed for the second out. The outs are independent of each other if it does not matter which card comes first, and one card appearing does not affect the probability of the other card appearing except by changing the number of remaining cards; an example is drawing two cards to an inside straight. The outs are conditional on each other if the number of outs available for the second card depends on the first card; an example is drawing two cards to an outside straight.

After the flop, if x is the number of independent outs for one card and y is the number of outs for the second card, then the probability P of making the runner-runner is

$$P = \frac{x}{47} \times \frac{y}{46} \times 2 = \frac{xy}{1081}.$$

For example, a player holding **JD QD** after the flop **9H 5C 6S** needs a **10** and either a **K** or **8** on the turn and river to make a straight. There are 4 10s and 8 kings and 8s, so the probability is $\frac{4 \times 8}{1081} \approx 0.0296$.

The probability of making a conditional runner-runner depends on the condition. For example, a player holding **9H 10H** after the flop **8D 2S AC** can make a straight with {**J, Q**}, {**7, J**} or {**6, 7**}. The number of outs for the second card is conditional on the first card—a **Q** or **6** (8 cards) on the first card leaves only 4 outs (**J** or **7**, respectively) for the second card, while a **J** or **7** (8 cards) for the first card leaves 8 outs ({**Q, 7**} or {**J, 6**}, respectively) for the second card. The probability P of a runner-runner straight for this hand is calculated by the equation

$$P = \left(\frac{8}{47} \times \frac{4}{46} \right) + \left(\frac{8}{47} \times \frac{8}{46} \right) = \frac{96}{2162} \approx 0.0444$$

The following table shows the probability and odds of making a runner-runner from a disjoint set of outs for common situations and the equivalent normal outs.

Drawing to	Probability	Odds	Equivalent outs
Outside straight	0.04440	21.5 : 1	1.04
Inside+outside straight	0.02960	32.8 : 1	0.70
Inside-only straight	0.01480	66.6 : 1	0.35
Outside straight flush	0.00278	359 : 1	0.07
Inside+outside straight flush	0.00185	540 : 1	0.04

The preceding table assumes the following definitions.

Outside straight and straight flush

Drawing to a sequence of three cards of consecutive rank from **3-4-5** to **10-J-Q** where two cards can be added to either end of the sequence to make a straight or straight flush.

Inside+outside straight and straight flush

Drawing to a straight or straight flush where one required rank can be combined with one of two other ranks to make the hand. This includes sequences like **5-7-8** which requires a **6** plus either a **4** or **9** as well as the sequences **J-Q-K**, which requires a **10** plus either a **9** or **A**, and **2-3-4** which requires a **5** plus either an **A** or **6**.

Inside-only straight and straight flush

Drawing to a straight or straight flush where there are only two ranks that make the hand. This includes hands such as **5-7-9** which requires a **6** and an **8** as well as **A-2-3** which requires a **4** and a **5**.

Compound outs

The strongest runner-runner probabilities lie with hands that are drawing to multiple hands with different runner-runner combinations. These include hands that can make a straight, flush or straight flush, as well as four of a kind or a full house. Calculating these probabilities requires adding the compound probabilities for the various outs, taking care

to account for any shared hands. For example, if P_s is the probability of a runner-runner straight, P_f is the probability of a runner-runner flush, and P_{sf} is the probability of a runner-runner straight flush, then the compound probability P of getting one of these hands is

$$P = P_s + P_f - P_{sf}.$$

The probability of the straight flush is subtracted from the total because it is already included in both the probability of a straight and the probability of a flush, so it has been added twice and must therefore be subtracted from the compound outs of a straight or flush.

The following table gives the compound probability and odds of making a runner-runner for common situations and the equivalent normal outs.

Drawing to	Probability	Odds	Equivalent outs
Flush, outside straight or straight flush	0.08326	11.0 : 1	1.98
Flush, inside+outside straight or straight flush	0.06938	13.4 : 1	1.65
Flush, inside-only straight or straight flush	0.05550	17.0 : 1	1.30

Some hands have even more runner-runner chances to improve. For example, holding the hand **JS QS** after a flop of **10S JH 7D** there are several runner-runner hands to make at least a straight. The hand can get two cards from the common outs of **{J, Q}** (5 cards) to make a full house or four of a kind, can get a **J** (2 cards) plus either a **7** or **10** (6 cards) to make a full house from these independent disjoint outs, and is drawing to the compound outs of a flush, outside straight or straight flush. The hand can also make **{7, 7}** or **{10, 10}** (each drawing from 3 common outs) to make a full house, although this will make four of a kind for anyone holding the remaining 7 or 10 or a bigger full house for anyone holding an [overpair](#). Working from the probabilities from the previous tables and equations, the probability P of making one of these runner-runner hands is a compound probability

$$P = 0.08326 + 0.00925 + \frac{2 \times 6}{1081} + (0.00278 \times 2) \approx 0.1092$$

and odds of 8.16 : 1 for the equivalent of 2.59 normal outs. Almost all of these runner-runners give a winning hand against an opponent who had flopped a straight holding **8, 9**^[3], but only some give a winning hand against **AS 2S** (this hand makes bigger flushes when a flush is hit) or against **KC QD** (this hand makes bigger straights when a straight is hit with **8 9**). When counting outs, it is necessary to adjust for which outs are likely to give a winning hand—this is where the skill in poker becomes more important than being able to calculate the probabilities.

Notes

1. ^{*} The odds presented in this article use the notation **x : 1** which translates to *x to 1 odds against* the event happening. The odds are calculated from the probability **p** of the event happening using the formula: odds = $[(1 - p) \div p] : 1$, or odds = $[(1 \div p) - 1] : 1$. Another way of expressing the odds **x : 1** is to state that there is a *1 in x+1* chance of the event occurring or the probability of the event occurring is $1/(x+1)$. So for example, the odds of a role of a fair six-sided die

coming up three is 5 : 1 against because there are 5 chances for a number other than three and 1 chance for a three; alternatively, this could be described as a 1 in 6 chance or 1/6 probability of a three being rolled because the three is 1 of 6 equally-likely possible outcomes.

2. ^{a b} By removing reflection and applying aggressive search tree pruning, it is possible to reduce the number of unique head-to-head hand combinations from 207,205 to less than 50,000. Reflection eliminates redundant calculations by observing that given hands h_1 and h_2 , if w_1 is the probability of h_1 beating h_2 in a [showdown](#) and s is the probability of h_1 [splitting the pot](#) with h_2 , then the probability w_2 of h_2 beating h_1 is $w_2 = 1 - (s + w_1)$, thus eliminating the need to evaluate h_2 against h_1 . Pruning is possible, for example, by observing that **QH JH** has the same chance of winning against both **8D 7C** and **8D 7S** (but *not* the same probability as against **8H 7C** because sharing the heart affects the flush possibilities for each hand.)
3. ^a In the example, if the opponent is holding either **8H 9H** or **8D 9D**, then the opponent wins with a flush if the player makes a straight using two hearts or two diamonds, respectively. If the opponent is holding **8D 9D**, then the opponent wins with a straight flush if the player makes a full house with **10D JD**.

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[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Texas hold 'em hands

In the [poker](#) game [Texas hold 'em](#), a player's **hand** consists of two [hole cards](#), which belong solely to the player and remain hidden from the other players. Five [community cards](#) are also dealt into play. Betting begins before any of the community cards are exposed, and continues throughout the hand.

The player's "playing hand", which will be compared against that of each competing player, is the best 5-card [poker hand](#) available from his two hole cards and the five community cards.

Unless otherwise specified, here the term *hand* applies to the player's two hole cards, or *starting hand*.

Essentials

There are $(52 \times 51)/2 = 1,326$ distinct possible combinations of two hole cards from a standard 52-card deck in hold 'em, but since suits have no relative value in poker, many of these hands are identical in value before the [flop](#). For example, ACJC and AHJH are identical, because each is a hand consisting of an ace and a jack of the same suit. There are 169 nonequivalent starting hands in hold 'em (13 pocket pairs, $13 \times 12 / 2 = 78$ suited hands and 78 unsuited hands; $13 + 78 + 78 = 13 \times 13 = 169$). These 169 hands are *not* equally likely. Hold 'em hands are sometimes classified as having one of three "shapes":

- *Pairs*, (or "pocket pairs"), which consist of two cards of the same rank (e.g. 9S9C). One hand in 17 will be a pair, each occurring with individual probability $1/221$ ($P(\text{pair}) = 3/51 = 1/17$).
- *Suited* hands, which contain two cards of the same suit (e.g. AS6S). Four hands out of 17 will be suited, and each suited configuration occurs with probability $2/663$ ($P(\text{suited}) = 12/51 = 4/17$).
- *Offsuit* hands, which contain two cards of different suit and rank (e.g. KSJH). Twelve out of 17 hands will be nonpair, offsuit hands, each of which occurs with probability $2/221$ ($P(\text{offsuit non-pair}) = 3*(13-1)/51 = 12/17$).

It is typical to abbreviate suited hands in hold 'em by affixing an "s" to the hand, as well as to abbreviate non-suited hands with an "o" (for offsuit). That is,

QQ represents any pair of queens,

AK (or, sometimes, AKo) represents any ace and king of different suits, and

JTs represents any jack and ten of the same suit.

Texas hold 'em hand groups

David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth [\[1\]](#) assigned each hand to a group, and proposed all hands in the group could normally be played similarly. Stronger starting hands are identified by a lower number. Hands without a number are the weakest starting hands.

- Note: Unsuited on the bottom left, suited on the top right.

Chen Point Count

There is a way to compute the Sklansky Malmuth table for those people who have trouble memorizing. The results are almost identical to those generated using the Chen Point Count.[\[2\]](#) To compute the point count the following formula

Pre-Flop Basic Strategy

	A	K	Q	J	T	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
A	1	2	2	3	3	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8
K	2	1	2	3	7	7	7						
Q	3	4	1	3	8								
J	3	4	4	1	3								
T	4	7	8	7	2	6							
9	8	7				3	6						
8	8						4	6					
7								4	6				
6									5	8			
5										5			
4											5		
3												5	
2													5

should apply:

1. Take the high card and score it. A=10,K=8,Q=7,J=6,T-2 = 1/2 value shown.
2. If the 2nd card pairs the first the value is either twice the high card point or 5 which ever is greater.
3. If they are not paired then calculate the gap for the lower card and subtract off a gap penalty:
 1. For a 0 gapper subtract 0,
 2. For a 1 gapper subtract 1
 3. For a 2 gapper subtract 2
 4. For a 3 gapper subtract 4
 5. For a 4 gapper or more subtract 5 (includes A2,A3,A4).
4. If the cards are of the same suit apply a flush bonus of +2 pts.
5. If the cards are a 0 or 1 gap and the top card is a J or lower apply a +1 straight bonus
6. Round 1/2 point up

Then **12 - Chen Point Count** in general is the SM hand grouping. Examples:

- **8C 8S**: 4 pts for the first 8, double for the pair is 8 Chen points. This puts it in S&M group 4.
- **9C 7C**: 4.5 points for the 9, -1 for the 1 gapper, +2 for the same suit and +1 for the straight bonus. Round up to 7 Chen points which is in S&M group 5.

The following hands are the exceptions (off by 1): 55, AQs, A9, AX, 96s, 32s, 98, 97, 76.

Notes

1. [^](#) David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth (1999). Hold 'em Poker for Advanced Players. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685221
2. [^](#) Lou Krieger, Hold'em Excellence, ch Power Rating ISBN 1886070148

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Texas Hold'em Bonus Poker

Texas Hold'em Bonus Poker is a gambling [card game](#) is owned and licensed by Mikohn Gaming/Progressive Gaming International Corporation. The game is based on traditional multi-player [Texas Hold'em poker](#).

Rules

- The game is played with a standard 52 card deck.
- Each player makes an ante bet of 1 unit and may make an optional bonus bet.
- The player and dealer are both delt 2 cards (face down).
- After checking his/her cards, the player may decide to fold with no further play losing the ante bet or make a flop bet of 2 units.

- 3 cards are then dealt to the board.
- The player may decide to check or make a turn bet of 1 unit.
- Another card is dealt to the board (making 4 cards in total on the board).
- The player may decide to check to make a river bet of 1 unit.
- One more card is dealt to the board(making 5 in total).
- The player and dealer make their best 5 card poker hand from their own hand and 5 board cards.
- If the dealer's hand is better than the player's hand the player loses all bets.
- If the dealer's hand is equal to the player's hand, all bets are a push.
- If the player's hand is better than the dealer's hand, the player wins even money on the flop, turn and river bets. The player also wins even money on the ante bet if his best hand is a straight or better, otherwise the ante bet pushes.
- If a players hole cards are a pair, A-K, A-Q, or A-J, the player wins the bonus bet according to the payable. This bet pays even if the player does not beat the dealers hand.

Player Strategy

The optimal strategy for the flop bet is to call all hands except for 2-3 offsuit, 2-4 offsuit, 2-5 offsuit, 2-6 offsuit and 2-7 offsuit.

Because of the large number and variety of combinations, it is impossible to list a basic strategy for the turn and river bets.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

WinHoldEm

WinHoldEm is an online [Texas hold 'em](#) bot, created by Ray Bornert. Bots of this kind can sometimes be used in [online poker](#) play, but this is considered cheating by poker rooms, and grounds for account termination. The bot is loaded, and will play in lieu of a real human, calculating [pot odds](#) and making betting decisions based on these calculations. There is no way to accurately estimate the extent to which these bots are used.

The bot works through installing client software on your machine which interfaces with the poker room, i.e. it is able to read what cards have been dealt, what bets have been made, etc. The bot's 'intelligence' ends there. Whether the bot wins, or not, depends on the poker ability of the actual person. The poker strategy needs to be programmed by the user, so the bot is only as good as its master.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Dealer's choice

Dealer's choice is a style of [poker](#) where each player may deal a different game. A button passes to the left after every deal, giving the new dealer a chance to call a different game than the one that was previously called.

It is also the name of a poker book by James Ernest, Phil Foglio, and Mike Selinker, detailing over 200 variants that can be called in such a game.

- *Ernest, James; Selinker, Mike; Foglio, Phil (2005). Dealer's Choice: The Complete Handbook of Saturday Night Poker. Overlook Press. ISBN 1585676543.*

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Draw poker

Draw poker is any [poker variant](#) in which each player is dealt a complete hand before the first betting round, and then develops the hand for later rounds by replacing cards.

The descriptions below assume that you are familiar with the general game play of [poker](#), and with [hand values](#) (both high and low variations). They also make no assumptions about what [betting structure](#) is used. In home games, it is typical to use an [ante](#), and betting always begins with the player to the dealer's left. In casino play, it is more common to use [blinds](#); the first betting round thus begins with the player to the left of the big blind, and subsequent rounds begin with the player to the dealer's left, thus draw games are very [positional](#).

Some sample deals below will assume that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing in the examples, Bob, who is sitting to her left, Carol to his left, and David to Carol's left.

Standard five-card draw

Main article: [Five-card draw](#)

This is often the first poker variant learned by most players, and is very common in home games although it is now quite rare in casino and tournament play. Two to eight players can play.

Other draw games

Gardena jackpots ("Jacks to open" or simply "Jackpots")

Played as above, with standard hand values, and with a single joker in the deck acting as a [bug](#). Always played with an ante and no blinds. On the first betting round, no player is allowed to open the betting unless his hand already contains a pair of jacks or a better hand. Other players who checked on the first round may subsequently call or raise if someone else opens. If no player opens, a new deal begins and everyone antes again into

the same pot. The player who opened the betting keeps his discarded cards near him on the table so that he can prove, if necessary, that he had a sufficient opening hand. For example, a player with the **K, J, 9**, and **7** of clubs and the **J** of hearts has a pair of jacks and may open. He may wish to "break openers" in this case by discarding the jack of hearts in an attempt to make the club flush, so he keeps the discarded jack to prove that he was entitled to open.

The game is named after the city of Gardena, California, where this game was especially popular from the 1930s to 1970s (though it was always secondary to lowball). At that time, there were more public poker tables in that small city than in all the rest of the United States. Public poker rooms are still a big industry there, though Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and other locations now have many more poker rooms than they did at that time. Because "Jacks to open" was the primary form of high-hand draw poker played there, traditional draw poker was often described by the retronym "Guts to open".

In home games, it is common that when a deal is "passed out" (that is, when no one opens), the players re-ante, and the qualifier to open is raised to a pair of queens. If that deal is passed out, the qualifier is raised to kings, and finally to aces. This is called "progressive" jackpots.

California lowball

Main article: [Lowball \(poker\)](#)

This was the primary poker game played in California during the heyday of Gardena in the 1970s. It is still played today, though its popularity has somewhat lessened since the introduction of [stud poker](#) and [community card poker](#) to the state.

Played as above, using [ace-to-five low](#) hand values, with a single joker in the deck. Always played with blinds rather than antes, so players may not check on the first betting round (but may on the second round). A player with a 7-high hand or better who checks after the draw forfeits his right to win any money placed in the pot after the draw. (In other words, you may not check a "seven" unless you intend to fold when someone else bets). Another common rule in low-limit games is that a player who checks on the second betting round may not subsequently raise on that round. This latter rule is never used in games with a pot limit or no limit betting structure.

Badugi

Main article: [Badugi](#)

Also sometimes known as Padooki or Badougi, Badugi is a four card [ace-to-five low](#) lowball variant where traditional poker hand rankings are changed. A Badougi is a four card hand where all the cards are of different ranks and suits. Any cards which match another card in rank or suit does not play and the first criteria for evaluating hands is the number of cards which are playing. The following is the ranking of several example of hands from best to worst:

1. Ace of spades, 2 of clubs, 3 of hearts, 4 of diamonds: 4 card 4 high best possible Badougi
2. 4 of spades, 6 of hearts, 8 of diamonds, J of clubs: 4 card J high Badougi

3. Ten of clubs, J of hearts, Q of Diamonds, K of hearts: 4 card worst possible Badougi
4. Ace of hearts, Ace of diamonds, 4 of clubs, 5 of spades: 3 card hand, 5 high
5. Ace of clubs, Ace of spades, 4 of spades, 6 of spades: 2 card hand, 4 high

Badougi is usually played triple-draw, with a 1-1-2-2 betting structure, although it also plays well at no limit.

Other forms of lowball

Five-card draw, with no joker, and [deuce-to-seven low](#) hand values is called "Kansas City" or "Low Poker" or even "Billy Baxter" draw in honor of the player who dominated the world championship in the event for many years. The 7-high rule and the no check-and-raise rule do not apply. In the eastern United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, [ace-to-six low](#) hand values are common.

California high/low split

Played as above, with a single joker, used as a [bug](#). High hand and low hand (using the [ace-to-five low](#) values) [split](#) the pot. An 8-high or better low is required to win low. If no hand qualifies low, high hand takes the whole pot. Played [cards speak](#), that is, players do not declare whether they intend to win the high or low half of the pot (or both); they simply show their cards and the best hands win. Because ace-to-five low values are used, a hand such as a low straight or flush can win both high and low, called "scooping" or "hogging" the pot.

High/low with declare

Main article: [High-low split](#)

This is common in home games but is rarely found in casinos today. Played as are other versions of five-card draw, but after the second betting round and before the showdown, there is a simultaneous [declaration](#) phase. Each player takes two chips from his stack and takes them under the table, bringing up a closed fist that contains either no chips (indicating that the player intends to win the low half of the pot), one chip (indicating that the player intends to win the high half), or two chips (indicating that he intends to scoop). When everyone has brought up the closed fist, the players all open their hands simultaneously to reveal their choices. If any player shows two chips, and his hand is the best low and the best high, he scoops the pot. Otherwise, half of the pot goes to the player with the highest hand who declared high, and the other half to the player with the lowest hand of those who declared low. There is no qualifying hand to win either high or low, and if no one declares in one direction, the full pot is awarded in the other (for example, if all players declare low, the low hand wins the whole pot rather than half). A player who declares for a scoop must win both ends outright, with no ties. For example, if a player declares scoop, has the lowest hand clearly but ties for high, he wins nothing. The other player with the same high hand wins the high half of the pot and the next-lowest hand wins

low (assuming he declared low--if no other player declared low, the high hand who declared high wins the whole pot).

This game can be played with [deuce-to-seven low](#) or [ace-to-six low](#) hand values, but in that case it is nearly impossible to scoop (though you can still win the whole pot if everyone declares the same direction).

Double-draw and Triple-draw

Any game above can be played with two or three draw phases and therefore three or four betting rounds. Double-draw California lowball is a particularly good game. Triple draw lowball, either [ace-to-five](#) or [deuce-to-seven](#), has gained some popularity among serious players. The 2004 [World Series of Poker](#) included a deuce-to-seven triple-draw lowball event.

Four-before

Another variation that can be applied to any game above, but that is especially suited to lowball. On the initial deal, only four cards are dealt to each player. A betting round follows, then each player draws one more card than he discards, completing his hand to five cards. Then the final betting round and showdown. Note that it is impossible to be dealt a "pat" hand, that is, a hand (such as a straight or flush) that is complete before the draw.

Johnson (and "Jacks back")

Played with one joker which acts as a [bug](#). Must be played with antes and no blinds. Each player is dealt five cards. The first betting round begins with the player to the dealer's left, who may check or open with anything. If any player opens, the game continues as traditional five-card draw poker. If the first round is passed out (that is, no one opens), then the player to the dealer's left may now open if he chooses, but the game has switched to California lowball. On the rare occasion that the deal is passed out yet again, players re-ante and deal again. This game plays well head-up (that is, with only two players). When the game is played that a pair of jacks or better is required to open on the first high-hand round, the game is called "Jacks back".

Some examples might help clarify: On the first deal, players ante and Alice deals five cards around. Bob sees that he has a 6-high straight, which is a very good hand for both high and low. He also wants to be deceptive about the value of his hand, so he checks. Carol opens for \$1, David folds, Alice raises to \$2, and Bob (who now realizes that Carol and Alice want to play high hands) reraises to \$3, which is called by Carol and Alice. Bob announces that he "stands pat" (draws no cards). Carol draws three cards, and Alice draws two. Bob bets \$2, Carol folds, Alice raises, and Bob calls. Bob shows his straight, but Alice has made a full house and wins the pot.

On the second deal, Bob has the same hand: a 6-high straight, and makes the same play, checking. This time, Carol also checks, as does David, and finally Alice. Now it is Bob's turn again, but now they are playing lowball. He opens for \$1. Carol folds, and David raises to \$2.

Alice folds, and Bob reraises to \$3 (a 6-high is a very good low hand; much better, in fact, than a 6-high straight would be for high). David calls. Bob stands pat, and David draws one card. Bob bets \$2 (he is required to bet under California lowball rules since he has a hand better than 7-high), and David calls. Bob shows his 6-5-4-3-2 low, and David shows 7-5-4-3-A low, and Bob wins with his 6-high.

Q-Ball

This is a lowball game designed by Michael Wiesenbergs that combines some of the variations mentioned above. It is generally played with three [blinds](#)--one unit from the dealer, one unit to his left, and two units for the second player to the dealer's left. The deck contains one joker. Each player is dealt three cards, followed by a round of betting beginning with the player immediately after the big blind who may call the big blind, raise, or fold (there is no checking on the first round). Next, each player is dealt a fourth card, followed by a second round of betting starting with the still-active player to the dealer's left. No checking is allowed on this round either, despite the fact that there is no bet facing the first player; the first player must [open](#) or fold. Each player is then dealt a fifth card, followed by a third betting round beginning on the dealer's left. At this point, checking is allowed. Finally, each player draws as in normal draw poker, followed by a fourth betting round and showdown. [Ace-to-five low](#) values are used.

Played at [fixed limit](#), it is recommended that the betting structure be 1-2-2-4; that is, the second and third betting rounds should allow a bet of twice the amount of the first round, and the final bet should allow four times the amount of the first round.

"Home" games

These are somewhat less-serious games that are typically played only in home games at small stakes. This does not necessarily mean that there is less opportunity for skillful play, just that the games are seen as more social than competitive.

To help grow the betting pot in a home game, one can add a variant known as the "kill card" to the rules. Kill cards work best with stud games or shared card games as no one player can control when the "kill card" is played.

One popular "kill card" game is called Chernobyl Cowboy. The "Chernobyl Cowboy" is the King of Hearts. Whenever the King of Hearts appears face up in a [stud](#) or shared card game the game is dead. All bets remain in the pot and the game begins again with a new ante and a new deal. Anyone who has folded is out until the game concludes. For example: In a seven card stud game each player gets two cards down, then four cards up, then one final card down. In a seven card stud game with a "Chernobyl Cowboy", if the King of Hearts comes up during the time the four up cards are dealt, the game is killed and everyone who is still in antes again for a new round.

Shotgun ("Roll 'em out" and "Skinny Minnie")

This is a draw game that plays much like a [stud](#) game. First five cards are dealt to each player, followed by a betting round, and a draw. Now, in place of a second round and showdown, there is a [rollout](#) phase, which begins with the players arranging their five cards in any chosen order, placing them face down in front of themselves. Each player's top card is now revealed, followed by a betting round. Then each player reveals his next card, followed by a betting round. Then a third card is revealed, followed by a betting round, a fourth card, a betting round, and finally a showdown. Players may not change the order of their cards at any time during the rollout phase.

This game can be played for high or low, but plays best at [high-low split](#), in which case it is called "Skinny Minnie".

Spit in the ocean

This might be classified as a hybrid draw/[Community card](#) game, but it is placed here because it plays mostly as a draw game. On the initial deal, each player is dealt four cards, and then a single card is dealt to the center of the table face up. This card plays as if it were the fifth card in every player's hand. It is also a wild card, and every other card of its rank is also wild. The first betting round is then played, followed by a draw in which each player replaces cards from his hand with an equal number, so that each player still has only four cards in hand. A final betting round is followed by a showdown. High-hand values are used.

Here's a sample deal: Alice deals four cards to each player, then deals the next card face up to the center of the table. it is the **6** of diamonds, and this makes all **6**-spot cards wild. Bob opens for \$1, Carol raises to \$2, David folds, Alice and Bob call. Bob discards two cards, and receives two replacements. Carol draws one card, and Alice draws one. Bob checks, Carol bets \$2, Alice raises to \$4, Bob folds, Carol reraises to \$6, and Alice calls. The cards in Carol's hand are **Q-Q-6-4**. Because the **6** in her hand and the one on the board are wild, her hand is four queens. Alice's hand contains **K-J-9-7**, all spades. With the shared wild card, this gives her a flush, which loses to Carol's four queens.

Anaconda ("Pass the trash")

Main article: [Anaconda \(poker\)](#)

Seven cards are dealt to each player. Before the first betting round, each player examines his hand, and removes exactly three cards from his hand and places them on the table to his left. After each person has thus discarded, he picks up the cards discarded by his right-hand neighbor and places them in his hand (thus, each player will have given three cards to his left-hand neighbor). It is important that each player discard before looking at the cards he is to receive. After the first pass, there is a betting round. Then a second pass occurs, each player passing two cards to his right. A second betting round is followed by a third pass, each player passing one card to his left. Finally, a fourth betting round and a showdown, in which the player with the best five-card high hand he can make out of the seven in his hand wins the pot.

In some casual games, the showdown is replaced by a [rollout](#) phase, as described above in "Shotgun". This makes a total of eight betting rounds in the game, which generally destroys any chance for skillful play in the later rounds.

Ad hoc variants

Any of the above games can be modified in many ways upon player whim, by designating additional wild cards, betting rounds, more or fewer cards, altered hand values, and any other change agreed upon by all players prior to each deal. You can announce such a game by using the name of an existing game and specifying the variations, for example "Three-card Triple-draw California lowball, Kings wild" (a surprisingly good game heads up). Many times this will result in a game that does not play well, but occasionally will produce a game that is well-suited to a particular group of players. Even if it doesn't, such games can be used sparingly to enliven an otherwise serious game.

Here are some general guidelines:

- If you want to designate some normal suited cards as wild, choose cards that would otherwise be bad for the game being played. For example, deuces wild for high-hand games, kings wild for lowball, 9-spots wild for [high-low split](#) (where an 8-high or lower is necessary to win low).
- High-low split games play best with more than four players.
- When playing high-low split, it is necessary to have either a [declaration](#) phase or a qualifier (but not both). The most common form is 8-high or better to qualify low, but also common is any pair/no pair (that is, a pair or better is required to win high, and no pair or better low is required to win low), and 9-high for low.
- Designating more than four wild cards (or possibly six) will result in considerable confusion and many ties.
- Two to five betting rounds makes a good game. One round or more than five rounds reduces the amount of skill involved.
- Sometimes there is no betting round before the draw; players pick up their cards, discard and draw, and then the betting starts.
- Giving each player more than eight or nine cards usually makes a bad game. (Note that in Anaconda, each player will have seen up to thirteen cards!) **

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Anaconda](#) | [Badugi](#) | [Five-card draw](#) | [Lowball](#)

Anaconda

Anaconda is a variety of the card game [Poker](#), also called "Pass The Trash Poker."

Simple Play

This version of the game is also called "3-2-1 Anaconda" or "3-2-1 Left."

Each player is dealt 6 cards. They then each select 3 cards to be passed to the player on their left. These cards are simply set on the table near their left-most opponent. No players get to see their new 3 cards until everyone has made a pass. Afterward, the players repeat the process, only with 2 cards, then again with 1 card. Players then discard 1 card to make their best 5-card Poker hand.

In this version of the game, up to 8 people can play, passing out a total of 48 cards and having 4 left over. A 9th person can be added with the use of both Jokers as [Wild cards](#).

Betting

Betting can be included in the simple version of the game. Set up general Poker staples such as the dealer button, [blinds](#), and/or antes. Have a round of betting occur before the first pass of 3 cards, then again after every card pass is made, and ending with a [showdown](#) if necessary. If a player folds at anytime, then they are no longer involved in card passing.

Variations

Anaconda can be changed in many possible ways, such as:

- Altering the amount of starting cards (7 cards is common).
- Altering the amount of cards passed.
- Altering who the cards are passed to, possibly per round.
- Incorporating Joker cards.
- Including only one betting round & showdown after all passing rounds.
- Removing all betting rounds and playing without money/chips.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Badugi

Badugi (also known as **Badougi** or **Padooki**) is a [draw poker](#) variant similar to triple draw, but with differing hand values than traditional poker. The betting structure and overall play of the game is identical to a standard poker game, but unlike traditional poker which involves a minimum of five cards, players' hands contain only four cards at any one time. During each of three drawing rounds, players can trade zero to four cards from their hands for new ones from the deck, in an attempt to form the best *badugi hand* and win the pot. The object of Badugi is to win [pots](#), the share of money put in by oneself and one's opponents during the hand. The winner of the pot is the person, who has not folded, with the best badugi hand at the conclusion of play (known as the [showdown](#)).

Originating in Asia, Badugi is becoming very popular in the United States.

Play of the hand

Play begins with each player being dealt four cards face down. Each player may observe those four cards she is dealt, but not the cards dealt to other players. The hand begins with a "pre-draw" betting round, beginning with the player to the left of the [big blind](#) (or the player to the left of the dealer, if no blinds are used) and continuing clockwise. Each player must either call the amount of the big blind (put in an amount equal to the big blind), fold (relinquish any claim to the pot), or raise (put in more money than anyone else, thus requiring others to do the same).

Once everyone has put the same amount of money in the pot or folded, play proceeds to the draw. Beginning with the first player still in the pot to the left of the dealer, each player may discard any number of cards and receive an equal number of replacement cards (called the "draw"). Replacement cards are dealt before the next player chooses the number of cards to draw. The discarded cards are not readdded to the deck but are discarded from the game.

The first draw is followed by a second betting round. Here players are free to check (not put in any money, but also remain in the hand) until someone bets. Again betting proceeds until all players have put in an equal amount of money or folded. After the second betting round ends, there is another draw followed by a third betting round. After that there is the final draw, followed by a fourth betting round and the [showdown](#), if necessary.

If at anytime all players but one have folded, the sole remaining player is awarded the pot. If there are more than one player remaining at the conclusion of the final betting round, the hands of those players are compared and the player with the best badugi hand is awarded the pot.

Hand evaluation

Badugi has a different ranking of hands than traditional [poker](#). Although every player has four cards to use, the rules of the game require that certain cards be removed to construct a one, two, three or four card *badugi hand*. At the [showdown](#) (after all betting has concluded), a player is forced to remove the higher of any two suited cards and any paired cards from the four. This generates a badugi hand of one to four cards. Any four card badugi hand beats a three card badugi hand, three card badugi hands beat a two card badugi hand, and two card badugi hands beats a one card badugi hand. A four card badugi hand is often referred to simply as a "badugi".

Two badugi hands containing the same number of cards are evaluated by comparing the highest card in each hand (where ace is low). As in [lowball](#), the hand with the lower card is superior. If there is a tie for the highest card, the second highest card (if there is one) is compared. If the ranks of all the cards in the badugi hand are the same the two hands tie. As with standard poker games, suits are irrelevant in comparison of two hands.

Here are a few examples:

- 2S4C5D6H beats AS2C3D7H (both are four card hands) since the highest card is compared first and the 6H is smaller than 7H.

- 4S5C6DKH beats 2S3S4D7H the former is a four card hand and the second is a three card hand (the 3S must be discarded making the hand 2S4D7H).
- 2S3S4D7H beats 4S5S6DKH both are three card hands, the highest in the first is the 7H while the highest in the second is the KH.
- 5D7CKCKH beats 2S3DKSKD the former is a three card hand (made by discarding the KC) the later is a two card hand (made by discarding the two Kings).

Example hand

Here is a sample deal involving our four players. The players' individual hands will not be revealed until the showdown, to give a better sense of what happens during play:

Compulsory bets: Alice is the dealer. Bob, to Alice's left, posts a small blind of \$1, and Carol posts a big blind of \$2.

First betting round: Alice deals four cards face down to each player, beginning with Bob and ending with herself. Ted must act first because he is the first player after the big blind. He cannot check, since the \$2 big blind plays as a bet, so he folds. Alice calls the \$2. Bob adds an additional \$1 to his \$1 small blind to call the \$2 total. Carol's blind is "live" (see [blind](#)), so she has the *option* to raise here, but she checks instead, ending the first betting round. The pot now contains \$6, \$2 from each of three players.

First draw: Each player may now opt to draw up to four cards in an attempt to improve their hands. Bob, who is to the dealers immediate left, is given the first chance to draw. Bob discards two cards and receives two replacement cards from the top of the deck. Bob's discarded cards are not added to the deck, but removed from play. Carol now chooses to also draw two. Finally, Alice chooses to draw one.

Second betting round: Since there are no forced bets in later betting rounds, Bob is now first to act. He chooses to check, remaining in the hand without betting. Carol bets, adding \$2 to the pot. Alice and Bob both call, each adding \$2 to the pot. The pot now contains \$12.

Second draw: Bob draws one. Carol opts not to draw any cards, keeping the four she has (known as *standing pat*). Alice draws one.

Third betting round: Bob checks again and Carol bets \$4. Alice, this round, raises making the total bet \$8. Bob folds and Carol calls the additional \$4. The pot now contains \$20.

Third draw: Since Bob has folded Carol is now first to act, she opts to draw one. Alice stands pat (does not draw).

Last betting round: Carol checks and Alice bets \$4. Carol calls.

Showdown: Alice shows 2S4C6D9H for a nine-high badugi (or four card hand). Carol has 3S5D7C8H, an eight-high badugi. Carol wins the \$28 pot.

Betting structures

In casino play, it is common to use a [fixed limit](#) and two [blinds](#). The limit for the first two rounds of betting is called a *small bet*, while the limit for the third and fourth betting

rounds is called a [big bet](#) and is generally double the small bet. The *small blind* is usually equal to half of a small bet, and the *big blind* is equal to a full small bet.

This game is also played pot-limit, half-pot-limit, and no-limit. These structures allow for more range in the amounts bet.

Strategy

Badugi shares many strategic similarities with other forms of [draw poker](#), and many of the strategic concepts used in draw apply to badugi as well. In general, drawing on the last round against an opponent who has not drawn is considered a mistake, unless special circumstances warrant this maneuver.

Like other games with a fixed order of play, [position](#) can be an important component in badugi strategy. Players who are last to act often have an opportunity to [bluff](#) since they are able to observe the actions of other players before they act. In addition, players in late position are able to determine the strength of their hand more accurately by observing the actions of other players.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Five-card draw

Five-card draw is often the first [poker variant](#) learned by most players, and is very common in home games although it is now rare in casino and [tournament](#) play. The [lowball](#) variations make more interesting games and are more commonly played in casinos. Two to eight players can play.

The descriptions below assume that you are familiar with the general game play of [poker](#), and with [hand values](#). They also make no assumptions about what [betting structure](#) is used. In casino play, it is common to use blinds; the first betting round thus begins with the player to the left of the big blind, and subsequent rounds begin with the player to the dealer's left. In home games, it is typical to use an ante; the first betting round begins with the player to the dealer's left, and the second round begins with the player who opened the first round.

Play begins with each player being dealt five cards, one at a time, all face down. The remaining deck stub is placed aside, often protected by placing a chip or other marker on it. Players pick up the cards and hold them in their hands, being careful to keep them concealed from the other players. The first "before the draw" betting round occurs at this point, starting with the player to the dealer's left (or to the left of the big blind if blinds are used).

If more than one player remains after the first round, the "draw" phase begins. Each player specifies how many of his cards he wishes to replace, and discards that many from his hand. The deck stub is retrieved, and after a [burn card](#) is dealt, each player in turn beginning at the dealer's left is dealt from the stub the same number of cards he discarded, so that each player again has five cards. It is important that each player discards the cards

he wishes to replace before he takes any replacements, and that he take the same number of replacements as he discarded.

A second "after the draw" betting round occurs after the draw phase, beginning with the player to the dealers left or else beginning with the player who opened the first round (the latter is common when antes are used instead of blinds). This is followed by a [showdown](#) if more than one player remains, in which the player with the best [hand](#) wins the pot.

A common "house rule" in some places is that a player may not replace more than three cards, unless he draws four cards while keeping an ace (or [wild card](#)). This rule is only needed for low-stakes social games where many players will stay for the draw, and will help avoid depletion of the deck stub. In more serious games such as those played in casinos it is unnecessary and generally not used. A rule that *is* used by many casinos is that a player is not allowed to draw five consecutive cards from the deck stub. In this case, if a player wishes to replace all five of his cards, he is given four of them in turn, the other players are given their draws, and then the dealer returns to that player to give him his fifth replacement (if no later player drew, it is necessary to deal a [burn card](#) first).

Another common house rule is that the bottom card of the deck is never given as a replacement, to avoid the possibility of someone who might have seen it during the deal using that information. If the deck stub is depleted during the draw before all players have received their replacements, the last players can receive cards chosen randomly from among those discarded by previous players. For example, if the last player to draw wants three replacements but there are only two cards remaining in the deck stub, the dealer gives the player the one top card he can give, then shuffles together the bottom card of the deck, the burn card, and the earlier players' discards (but not the player's own discards!), and finally deals two more replacements to the last player.

Sample deal

The sample deal below assumes that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing in the examples; Bob, who is sitting to her left; Carol to his left; and David to Carol's left.

All four players ante \$.25. Alice deals five cards to each player and places the deck stub aside. Bob opens the betting round by betting \$1. Carol folds, David calls, and Alice calls, closing the betting round. Bob now declares that he wishes to replace three of his cards, so he removes those three cards from his hand and discards them. Alice retrieves the deck stub, deals a burn card, then deals three cards directly to Bob, who puts them in his hand. David discards one card, and Alice deals one card to him from the deck stub. Alice now discards three of her own cards, and replaces them with three from the top of the deck stub (Note: in a player-dealt casino game there is often a rule that the dealer must discard before picking up the deck stub, but this is a home game so we won't worry about such details). Now a second betting round begins. Bob checks, David bets \$3, Alice calls, and Bob folds, ending the second betting round. David shows a [flush](#), and Alice shows [two pair](#), so David takes the pot.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Lowball

Some forms of [poker](#), often called [lowball](#), sometimes called "low poker," reward poor poker hands (in the traditional sense). There are three common variations on this idea, differing in whether aces are treated as high cards or low cards, and whether or not straights and flushes are used. The methods are:

- Ace-to-five low: The lowest possible hand is **5-4-3-2-A**, called a wheel. Aces are low and straights and flushes are ignored. This is the most common method.
- Ace-to-six low: Also called *6-4 low*, since the lowest possible hand is **6-4-3-2-A**. Aces are low and straights and flushes count as high hands.
- Deuce-to-seven low: Also called *7-5 low*, since the lowest possible hand is **7-5-4-3-2**. Almost the direct inverse of traditional "high hand" poker. Aces are high and straights and flushes count as high hands. Since aces are high, **A-5-4-3-2** is not a straight, but just ace-high no pair.
- Deuce-to-six low: The other, mostly unused, possibility would be *6-5 low*. Aces are high, straights and flushes are ignored.

Some games are played [high-low split](#), where the player with the best traditional poker hand (called the "high hand") splits the pot with the best low hand. The low hand is decided by one of the methods above. According to Official Rules of Card Games by Albert Morehead^u, the low hand in high-low is generally the deuce-to-seven low, although many on-line casinos use ace-to-five low, with a qualifier, e.g., no card higher than an 8. Low hands tie more frequently than high hands, especially in [community card](#) games, so it is not uncommon for such a hand to win a small fraction of a poker pot. For example, if one player has the high hand on [showdown](#), and two other players tie for the best low hand, the high hand wins half of the pot and each low hand wins only a quarter of the pot. Playing ace-to-five high-low greatly increases the chances of the "scoop"--winning both hands--because a low flush or straight may count for both high and low. See [Rule variations \(poker\)](#)

References

1. ^u Albert H. Morehead (1996). *Official Rules of Card Games*. Ballantine Books. ISBN 0449911586.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

H.O.S.E

H.O.S.E (aka S.H.O.E) is a term used for playing a mixed game of [poker](#) consisting of four different poker games. H stands for [Hold'em](#), O for [Omaha Eight or Better](#), S for [7 Card Stud](#) and E for 7 Card Stud Eight or Better. This form of poker is most common at higher limit casino tables and is popular since it requires players to be skilled at many different forms of poker to succeed.

[H.O.R.S.E.](#) is a similar variant that has Razz thrown into the mix. Razz is 7 Card Stud played for low.

Until recently [tournaments](#) in H.O.S.E (last time 2003) and H.O.R.S.E (last time 2004) was featured at the [World Series of Poker](#) but in 2005 no such tournament was hosted, disappointing many players. The H.O.R.S.E tournament will be reinstated at the 2006 World Series of Poker event with a record \$50,000 buy-in to participate.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [H.O.R.S.E.](#)

H.O.R.S.E.

H.O.R.S.E is a form of [poker](#) commonly played at the high stakes tables of casinos. It consists of rounds of play alternating between [hold 'em](#) (H), Omaha eight or better (O), razz (R), [seven card stud](#) (S) and seven card stud eight or better (E).

A H.O.R.S.E tournament was last featured at the [World Series of Poker](#) in 2004, but will make a return in 2006 with a record-setting \$50,000 buy-in.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Kuhn poker

Kuhn poker is a simplified form of [poker](#) developed by Dr. Harold W. Kuhn, it is a zero sum two player game. The deck includes only three [playing cards](#), for example a King, Queen, and Jack. One card is dealt to each player, then the first player must bet or pass then the second player may bet or pass. If any player chooses to bet the opposing player must bet as well ("call") in order to stay in the round. After both players pass or bet the player with the highest card wins the [pot](#). Kuhn demonstrated that there are many game theoretic optimal strategies for the first player this game, but only one for the second player, and that played optimally the first player should expect to lose at a rate of 1/18 per hand.

In more conventional poker terms:

- Each player [antes](#) 1
- Each player is dealt one of the three cards, and the third is put aside unseen
- Player One can check or [raise](#) 1
 - If Player One checks then Player Two can check or raise 1
 - If Player Two checks there is a [showdown](#) for the [pot](#) of 2
 - If Player Two raises then Player One can [fold](#) or [call](#)
 - If Player One folds then Player Two takes the pot of 3
 - If Player One calls there is a showdown for the pot of 4
 - If Player One raises then Player Two can fold or call
 - If Player Two folds then Player One takes the pot of 3
 - If Player Two calls there is a showdown for the pot of 4

References

- H. W. Kuhn, *Simplified Two-Person Poker*; in H. W. Kuhn and A. W. Tucker (editors), *Contributions to the Theory of Games*, volume 1, pages 97-103, Princeton University Press, 1950.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Old Pink Poker](#)

Old Pink Poker

An extension of [Kuhn poker](#), the game uses five cards, the Ace, King, Queen, and Jack of Diamonds, and the Queen of Hearts. It is a simple game, without blinds or antes. Each player receives one card, and then bets, raises or folds to gain the pot from their opponent.

It is generally played by two people, although it can be played by three or four, and is often used to settle arguments or grudges in a social group. The attraction lays in its simplicity, and the fact that it is based almost entirely on reading people, instead of statistics, although it can be resolved from a game theory perspective. It is most played in the South of England, where it also known as overtake poker, animal poker, elephant poker, or any other animal. The most common Old Pink name is apparently a reference to the Pink Floyd song Empty Spaces, which contains the phrase as a hidden message when played backwards.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Strip poker

Strip poker is a variant of the [card game](#) of [poker](#), in which the rules require players to remove articles of clothing in response to various events. The first Strip Poker computer game was written by the German Gamedesigner Dieter Eckhardt in the late 1970's using the computers of an astronomical observatory near Düsseldorf.

Rules

The game can be played based on any variety of poker, with the same number of players, dealing and betting rules, etc. There are a number of ways in which the rules can then be developed into strip poker. For example, at the end of each hand:

- The player with the worst hand must remove a piece of their clothing; or
- The player who loses the most money in that round must remove one; or
- The player with the best hand may remove it from them; or
- The player with the best hand may choose which player must lose an article; or
- All players except the winner of the hand lose an article. Note that this makes for an extremely brief game, unless fully-nude players are required to perform

some action when they lose a hand, in which case it may even continue after all players are nude.

- Alternatively, whenever a player runs out of chips, they must trade a piece of clothing for a new (usually fixed) number of chips.
 - If players are then allowed to "buy back" clothing when they have won more chips, this can result in a zero-sum game, where there is no long-term net loss of clothing. (With two people, this will have the consequence that only one of them is missing clothing.) (Note that "buying back" may be disallowed, so that the aggregate nudity is always increasing.)

As a further variant, players who have lost all of their clothing, achieving nudity, must perform sex acts.

Popularity

There are no known professional associations. The U.S. TV show Strip Poker is in fact a general knowledge quiz, albeit one where contestants take (some of) their clothes off; though it involves cards in poker hands, the resemblance to the actual game is distant.

The most famous strip poker production was probably National Lampoon's Strip Poker, in which Playboy, World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), and pin-up models competed in unscripted no limit Texas Hold 'em poker competition. The productions were filmed in their entirety at the Hedonism II nudist resort in Negril, Jamaica, and first aired on Pay-Per-View in 2005. The winner of the first episode of National Lampoon's Strip Poker was veteran Playboy model Taylor Kennedy, who stripped five other models completely naked in the process. *National Lampoon's Strip Poker* was the first title in National Lampoon's history to feature full (frontal) female nudity.

The prefix "strip" can be added on to a game title with a subsequent nudity-inducing adaptation of the rules (e.g., strip Candyland and strip chess).

While a popular subject for pornographic fantasy and video games, genuine research into strip poker as a form of sexuality is lacking. The element of risk and of (mock) coercion fits in with a general sexual approach of domination and submission and/or humiliation.

Strip poker and other sexual games can occur:

- as part of a mature sexual relationship, where the objective is to provide variety alongside intercourse (possibly introducing more adventurous/deviant forms of intercourse)
- as a ritual of courtship (in some circumstances it may be more acceptable for partners to enter intimate situations as part of a game)
- as recreation amongst adults with no intention to move towards sexual intercourse
- as part of a pornographic display (whether as part of prostitution or not) which combines sexual titillation with the normal interest of seeing a game played
- as a party game for youth
- as the basis of television game shows such as Räsypokka (Finland - 2002) and Strip! (Germany - 1999)

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Stud poker

Stud poker is any of a number of [poker variants](#) in which each player receives a mix of face-down and face-up cards dealt in multiple betting rounds. Stud games are also typically [non-positional](#) games, meaning that the player who bets first on each round may change from round to round (it is usually the player whose face-up cards make the best hand for the game being played). The cards dealt face down to each individual player are called **hole cards** (which gave rise to the common English expression *ace in the hole*, which suggests that one has something valuable that is hidden from view).

[Five-card stud](#) first appeared during the American Civil War, and became very popular. In recent years, [Seven-card stud](#) has become more common, both in casinos and in home games. These two games form the basis of most modern stud poker variations.

The number of betting rounds in a game influences how well the game plays with different [betting structures](#). Games with four or fewer betting rounds, such as five-card stud and Mississippi stud (described below), play well with any structure, and are especially well suited to [no limit](#) and [pot limit](#) play. Games with more betting rounds are more suited to [fixed limit](#) or [spread limit](#). It is common (and recommended) for later betting rounds to have higher limits than earlier ones. For example, a "\$5/\$10 Seven-card Stud" game in a Nevada casino allows \$5 bets for the first two rounds and \$10 bets for subsequent rounds. Also common is to make the final round even higher: a "\$5/\$10/\$20" game would allow \$20 bets on the last round only. Another common rule is to allow the larger bet on the second round if there is an "open pair" (that is, at least one player's upcards make a pair). Some casinos (typically in California) use the smaller limit on the first three rounds rather than just the first two.

It is a common convention in stud poker to name the betting rounds after the number of cards each player holds when that betting round begins. So the bet that occurs when each player has three cards is called "third card" or "third street", while the bet that occurs when each player has five cards is "fifth street". The final round, regardless of the number of betting rounds, is commonly called the "river" or simply the "end".

The variations described below assume that you are already familiar with [five-card stud](#) and [seven-card stud](#), and with the [game play](#) of [poker](#) in general.

General variations

Some rule variations can be applied to almost any game, and combinations of these variations can be used to create ad-hoc games. These include [roll your own](#), [rollouts](#), blind stud, and [twist](#) rounds.

Any game can also be changed by adding one or more jokers to the deck to act as [wild cards](#), or by designating certain other cards as wild. Some specific common variations include **Low hole card wild**, in which each player's lowest-ranking downcard (and all other cards of that same rank) are wild in that player's hand only, and **Follow the queen**, in which each time a **Q** is dealt face up to anyone, the *next* face up card (and all others of that rank) become wild. The usual practice in the latter case is that if a second **Q** appears among the upcards, the previous wild card loses its status to the new one.

One can also vary any stud game by dealing extra downcards and requiring either that one or more hole cards be discarded at some point in the game or adding a restriction on how many of those hole cards may be played in the final hand. For example, five-card stud can be modified by dealing each player an extra downcard at the start of the game, adding the restriction that each player may only use one of his two downcards in his final hand. This game is called **Crocodile stud**. Likewise, seven-card stud can be modified by dealing each player three downcards instead of two on the first round, but adding the restriction that a player may use no more than two of those cards in his final hand (called **Buffalo stud**; if the extra hole card must be discarded after the first betting round, then it is **Australian stud**). If playing one of these games without the requirement to discard the extra hole card at some time during play, it is recommended as a practical matter to ensure compliance that each player physically discard one hole card immediately before showdown, before revealing the "live" hole cards (so that there can be no confusion about which cards were down).

Variations can be made by eliminating betting rounds, dealing more than one upcard at a time for one or more rounds. For example, Mississippi stud (see below) is basically seven-card stud with the second betting round removed, and the last card dealt face up instead of face down. Further adding an extra hole card as above makes it Murrumbidgee stud.

Games that mix stud-like rounds with community cards are discussed on the [Community card poker](#) page. In general, one can mix upcard rounds with community card rounds in many ways. See in particular Oxford stud on the community card game page.

Specific variants

As mentioned above, [seven-card stud](#) is probably the most common form of the game, with most other games being variants of that, although [five-card stud](#) is also a basic pattern upon which many variations are built. These games are described on their own page. Most of the games described below started as ad-hoc variants, but they have either become popular enough to have a common name, or else have some unique feature to merit including them here.

Six-card stud

Six-card stud is usually played as identical to seven-card stud, except that the last face-up round is removed (Thus it is two down, three up, one down). It can also be played as 1-4-1, where the first betting round occurs after only two cards are dealt (one down and one up). This latter form more closely resembles five-card stud with an extra downcard.

A variation called **Alligator stud** starts with one hole card and one upcard, followed by a first betting round; then *two* upcards are dealt to each player followed by a second betting round; then a fourth upcard and betting round, and finally a fifth upcard and betting round. This game plays well at [no limit](#) and [pot limit](#). The same game, but with each player initially dealt two downcards and one upcard, and restricted to using only one of his downcards in his final hand, is called **Zanetti stud**.

Razz (and London lowball)

Razz is seven-card stud played with [ace-to-five low](#) hand values. It is usually played with a bring-in, paid by the player with the highest-ranking upcard on the initial deal (aces are always low cards in Razz, even for the purpose of assigning the bring-in). On the second and subsequent rounds, the player with the lowest exposed hand starts the betting.

London lowball is seven-card stud played with [ace-to-six low](#) hand values. It is usually played at [pot limit](#) or [no limit](#), and is otherwise identical to Razz.

Here's a sample Razz deal (suits are omitted here because they are never of consequence in Razz; in London lowball, a flush cannot play as a low hand but otherwise they don't generally matter either). Alice deals each player two downcards and then one upcard: Bob's upcard is a **J**, Carol is dealt a **3**, David an **A**, and Alice a **4**. Bob's **J** is the high card (David's **A** is low), so he pays a \$1 bring-in. Carol, David, and Alice all call. Now Bob is dealt a **9**, Carol another **3**, David a **4**, and Alice a **2**. The best low hand showing is now David's **4-A**, just beating Alice's **4-2**. David bets \$1, Alice calls. Bob folds his **J-9**, and Carol calls (her pair of **3s** is the worst hand showing, but there are still many cards to come). Alice now deals Carol an **A**, David a **K**, and herself an **8**. The low hand showing is now Alice's **8-4-2**, so she bets \$2. Carol raises \$2, and David folds. Alice calls, ending the round. Carol is now dealt a **6**, and Alice another **8**. Now the lowest hand showing is Carol's **3-3-6-A**, a pair of **3s** being lower than Alice's pair of **8s**. She bets \$2 and Alice calls. A final downcard is dealt, Carol again bets \$2, and Alice calls. Alice reveals that her downcards are **7-J-A**, making her lowest five-card hand an **8-7-4-2-A**. Carol reveals her downcards to be a **4-6-7**, making her lowest five-card hand a **7-6-4-3-A**, which wins the pot.

Eight-or-better high-low stud

Also known as "seven eight" or "stud eight", **eight or better** is the most common form of high-low split stud. Played as seven-card stud, but the pot is split between the player with the highest hand and the player with the lowest hand (using the [ace-to-five low](#) values). An **8**-high hand or lower is required to win low. Betting takes place as if playing standard high-hand stud; that is, low card pays the bring-in, if any, on the first round, and subsequent rounds start the betting with the highest showing poker hand. The showdown is [cards speak](#), that is, there is no [declaration](#) for high and low. Each player may choose a different subset of five cards to play for high and low. For example, a player with **A-A-8-6-6-4-3** can play a high hand of **A-A-6-6-8**, and a low hand of **8-6-4-3-A**. A player with **K-9-8-7-6-5-4** can play a **9**-high straight for his high hand, and **8-7-6-5-4** for low (which is the worst possible qualifying low, but it does qualify). A player with **K-9-8-7-7-6-5** can play the **9**-high straight for high, but cannot play any low hand, because he cannot make an **8**-high or lower. If there is no qualifying low hand, high hand takes the entire pot.

This game plays well with a [bug](#) or two in the deck.

Mississippi stud

Mississippi stud was created to make seven-card stud play better at no limit and pot limit, and is slowly becoming popular for that reason. It is also often played with a betting structure more typical of [Texas hold 'em](#): fixed limit with the last two rounds double the limit of the first two. The bring-in should be less than the first-round limit.

Initial deal as in standard seven-card stud. After the first betting round, two upcards are dealt to each player, so each now has two down and three up (so unlike standard stud there is no betting on "fourth street"). A second betting round is followed by one more upcard and a third betting round. Finally, the last card is dealt face up, so that each player ends with two downcards and five upcards. Because each player has five upcards on the last round, straights, flushes, and full houses count as "high hand exposed" for the purpose of determining who must bet first. After the seventh street bet there is a normal showdown.

Can also be played with [low hands](#), or [high-low split](#). If three downcards are dealt initially instead of two, with the restriction that no more than two of them can be used in the final hand, this variation is called **Murrumbidgee stud**.

Mexican stud

Various forms of [roll your own five-card stud](#), often with a [stripped deck](#) and [wild cards](#), are called **Mexican stud**, Mexican poker, or Stud loco. One such variant played by the Casino San Pablo in northern California has these rules: **8s**, **9s**, and **10s** are stripped from the deck, and a single joker is added (the deck therefore contains 41 cards). The **7-spot** and the **J** become consecutive, so that **5-6-7-J-Q** is a straight. A flush beats a full house (with fewer cards of each suit, they are harder to get). The joker plays as a [bug](#) if it is face up, and fully wild if it is face down. The game is played as five-card stud choose-before roll your own. It is usually played with a very high ante, and the high card on the first round pays the bring-in.

The game of **Shifting sands** is Mexican stud in which each player's hole card (and all others of that rank) are wild for that player only.

Blind stud

Blind stud is a variant of stud poker in which all cards are dealt face down. Any stud poker game can be played "blind" by having all cards dealt face down.

Blind stud poker was commonly played in California cardrooms until 1985. The California gambling law makes specific games named by the law illegal, including twenty-one, faro, fantan, and "stud-horse poker". Until 1985, the California attorney general's office interpreted this to mean that [draw poker](#) was legal and all forms of stud poker were not, so California cardrooms played exclusively draw poker (mostly [lowball](#)). Blind stud was considered a form of draw poker, because like in draw all cards are hidden. Unlike draw, players do not discard cards they intend to replace. In 1985, cardroom owners convinced the state that "stud-horse poker" was an obsolete house-banked game, and that all forms of modern poker were legal. Today, the most popular game in the state is [Texas hold 'em](#).

Not constrained by obscure California law, home games generally do not play blind stud, though some of the forms of blind stud are challenging and well-balanced, including some of those previously offered by California cardrooms. Some of cardrooms got very creative with blind stud games so they could offer players some variety. For example, a club in the Sacramento suburbs used to offer a seven-card high-low split blind stud game which was played 3-2-1-1 (four rounds; three cards dealt on the first, two on the second, then one and one), with two jokers in the deck acting as [bugs](#), and with the [double-ace flush](#) rule.

Miscellaneous

- Five-card stud played high-low split with an added twist round is called **Option alley** or five-card option. The game **Canadian stud** or **Sökö** is five-card stud with two new hand values added: a four-card straight beats one pair, a four-card flush beats a four-card straight, and two pair beats both of the above.
- The term **English stud** is used ambiguously to refer to several games, including six-card stud played 1-4-1 with a twist (also called six-card option), London lowball, and a seven-card stud game where both sixth street and seventh street are twist rounds.
- In the game of **seven-card flip**, each player is dealt four cards face down, and chooses two of them to turn up. All cards are turned up simultaneously after everyone has chosen. As this point, the game proceeds as if it were standard seven-card stud starting on fourth street.
- **Kentrel**, or "48", is a seven-card stud variation which starts with each player being dealt four downcards. Each player must then discard one, choose one of the remaining three to turn face up (leaving two down and one up as normal), and then proceed as with eight-or-better high-low stud.
- The game of **Chicago** is seven-card stud in which the high hand splits the pot with the player who has the highest-ranking spade "in the hole" (among his downcards). There is also **Little Chicago**, in which the lowest ranking spade in the hole splits the pot; players who play Little Chicago call the high spade variant **Big Chicago**.
- **The Bitch** is a variant on **Chicago** above, played with a combination of up and down cards, usually two down, four up, and one down. The twist is that the Queen of Spades is designated as the highest ranking Spade, followed by the Ace, King, Jack, and so on. Also, if the Queen of Spades is ever dealt as an upcard to any player, all players turn in their cards, re-ante, and replay the game. This can lead to quickly increasing pots, especially if the re-ante amount is increased on each iteration. The high hand splits the pot with the high spade.
- Several different games played only in low-stakes home games are called **Baseball**, and generally involve many wild cards (often 3s and 9s), paying the pot for wild cards, being dealt an extra upcard upon receiving a 4, and many other ad-hoc rules (for example, the appearance of the queen of spades is called a "rainout" and ends the hand). These same rules can be applied to no peek, in which case the game is called "night baseball".

- **Cowpie poker** is played as seven-card stud until after the seventh-street bet. All remaining players then split their hands into a five-card hand and a two-card hand. The five-card hand *must* outrank the two-card hand, and the latter must contain at least one downcard. After the split there is one more betting round and showdown. Upon showdown, the highest five-card hand and the highest two-card hand split the pot. The name of the game is a pun on Pai Gow.
- **Number Nine** is a variant of seven-card stud in which 9s are wild, and any two number cards that add up to 9 may make one wild card, at the player's option. Aces count as 1 for wild card purposes. The player is not obliged to make any wild cards, and can play cards that could make 9s at face value or as wild cards, at his option. Cards used to make wild cards may not figure in the resulting hand twice. The player cannot add three or more cards. Sometimes, 9s themselves are not wild, and wild cards can be made only by addition.
- **Dr Pepper** is a stud variant where 10's, 2's, and 4's are wild (the name comes from one of the original Dr Pepper advertisements of the 1920s: "Drink a Bite to Eat at 10, 2, and 4 o'clock").
- **Draft** (or "socialist poker") is usually a variant of seven-card stud in which the second and subsequent upcard rounds are dealt this way: for each player remaining, one upcard is dealt to the center of the table (not to any specific player). The player with the worst showing hand gets to choose which of them he will take for his next upcard, then the player with the second-worst showing hand chooses his upcard from those left, and so on, until the player who previously had the best showing hand takes the remaining card. Then betting occurs as normal. In seven-card stud, this makes for three "draft" rounds (the first three cards are dealt normally, as is the final downcard).
- **Auction** is a similar variation in which each upcard round (or possibly just those after the first) begins with an "auction" phase. Instead of dealing each player one upcard, the first card is dealt to the center and all players bid on it; the player who bids the highest amount places that amount into the pot, and then has the right to either keep the auction card as his own upcard, or designate another player who is required to take it as his. After the first card is auctioned off and placed, the remaining players are dealt a random upcard as usual, and betting proceeds as usual. This variation is commonly played as high-low split, so it is common for a player to "purchase" a high card to force it upon an opponent seeking low, for example.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Caribbean stud poker](#) | [Five-card stud](#) | [Roll your own](#) | [Seven twenty-seven](#)
| [Seven-card stud](#) | [Twist](#)

Caribbean stud poker

Caribbean stud poker is a casino table game with rules similar to five card stud [poker](#). However, unlike standard poker games, Caribbean stud is played against the house rather

than against other players (and, like most such games, it cannot be beaten in the long run). There is no bluffing or other deception. For these reasons, most poker players do not consider it to be a form of poker. (They do not necessarily feel that it should not be called poker, but means merely that they will not refer to it as simply "poker". For instance, a gambler might say "I played poker" if he played [seven card stud](#), but probably would not if he played Caribbean stud.)

The following rules are typical of U.S. casinos, but some of the details (the payouts and limits) vary from casino to casino.

To play, every player places his [ante](#) on the layout where indicated; all ante wagers must be placed prior to the dealer announcing "*No more bets*". Each player and the dealer will then receive 5 cards, face down. The dealer will turn over one of his cards, then push the cards toward the players, after which the players may look at their cards. They may only look at their own cards, and may not discuss what they have with any other player at the table.

Players have the option to play or fold; if they choose to play, they place their bets (twice the amount of their respective ante) in the bet box. If they choose to fold, they forfeit their ante. After all the players have made their decisions, the dealer reveals his hole cards. The dealer only plays with an ace/king or higher; he then compares his cards to the players' cards (individually, right to left), and the best poker hand wins.

There are some major rules in Caribbean Stud Poker that *must* be observed at all times while playing:

- Only one hand per player. Players cannot hold or wager on multiple hands at the table.
- Players choosing to play the Progressive Payout feature are responsible for ensuring their \$1 wager has been inserted into slot and the "Indicator Light" is ON.
- Players may not exchange or communicate information regarding their hands to other players or the dealer. Player violation will result in a dead hand and forfeiture of all wagers.
- Incorrect amount of cards to the player constitutes a dead hand (or push) for that player only.
- The decision of the table/casino supervisor is final.
- If the dealer is dealt four cards of the five-card hand, the dealer shall deal an additional card to complete the hand. Any other misdeal to the dealer shall result in all hands being void and the cards shall be reshuffled.
- Each player shall be required to keep the five cards in full view of the dealer at all times. Once each player has examined his or her cards and placed them face down on the layout, they may not touch the cards again.
- If a hole card is exposed prior to the dealer announcing *No More Bets*, all hands shall be void.

If a player's cards beat the dealer's cards, the player will receive even money (1-1) on the ante, and the following on his bet (with a maximum payout of \$5,000 U.S. Dollars per hand on each bet wager):

[Royal flush](#)

100 to 1

[Straight flush](#) 50 to 1

[Four of a kind](#)

20 to 1

[Full house](#) 7 to 1

[Flush](#)

5 to 1

[Straight](#) 4 to 1

[Three of a kind](#)

3 to 1

[Two pair](#) 2 to 1

[One pair](#) or less

1 to 1

If the dealer does not have at least ace/king, all bet wagers will be void, and players will receive even money on their ante bet only. If the dealer's cards beat a player's cards, the dealer collects both the ante and bet.

In addition, in Caribbean stud poker, players can also bet on their poker hands and win the "progressive feature"; this is done by dropping a 1.00 dollar gaming chip into the chip acceptor on the table after placing the ante. Players with a flush or higher win, regardless of the outcome of their table bets:

Royal Flush 100% of Progressive Meter

Straight Flush 10% of Progressive Meter

Four-of-a-Kind \$500

Full House \$100

Flush \$50

Winning progressive payout hands are paid in accordance with the amount on the meter when it is the player's turn to be paid. However, if more than one player at a table has a royal flush progressive payout hand, each player shares equally in the amount on the meter when the first player with a royal flush is to be paid.

Caribbean Stud Poker in the United Kingdom

Caribbean Stud Poker differs slightly in the United Kingdom, and most parts of Europe, from the US. The game is officially known as "Casino Five Card Stud Poker", and not all casinos have the jackpot prize. Those which do have the prize, usually the large chain groups, officially call the game "Casino Jackpot Five Card Stud Poker". In both instances, the game is commonly referred to as "Casino Stud Poker".

The basic rules are the same in the UK as the US, although the payouts differ - the maximum bet is generally £100 on the ante and £200 on the raise, and all payouts are paid on the raise, meaning the maximum payout can potentially be £10,000 (a Royal Flush pays at the same odds, 50:1, as a Straight Flush).

Casinos offering the jackpot generally have the card shuffled by a card shuffling machine - the cards are then removed and dealt out by the dealer, or croupier. Independent and small casinos generally have the croupier shuffle the cards by hand.

British casinos do not use the chip dropper system; instead, a £1 chip is placed on a small plastic circle on the table, which lights up. The croupier then presses a button on a panel in front of them, which keeps the lights lit up once the chips are removed. The dealer removes the chips, and can then tell which players are playing the jackpot game and which are not.

If the dealer does not show an Ace/King, hands playing the jackpot must be turned over, face up, and shown to the dealer and table. If the player is not playing the jackpot prize, the cards are not shown.

Player Strategy

Using optimal strategy the house edge is 5.224% of the player's ante bet. This strategy can be complicated and does not lend itself to practical use in a casino. Using a strategy of raising with Ace/King/Jack/8/3 or better the house edge is 5.316%, very close to the optimal strategy house edge.

Knowledge of what other players hold can decrease the house edge. It has been estimated with the knowledge of 6 other player's hands (30 cards) and associated optimal strategy the player can gain an edge of 2.3%. Given that sharing information is against the rules and that a computer would be needed to calculate the appropriate strategy it is unlikely this could ever be achieved in a real life casino.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Five-card stud

Five-card stud is probably the earliest form of the card game, [stud poker](#), originating during the American Civil War, but is less commonly played today than [seven-card stud](#) and other games. It is still a popular game in a few locations such as South Africa (where it is played with a [stripped deck](#)). In Finland a specific version of five-card stud called Sökö (Canadian stud or Scandinavian stud) is still quite popular. The word *sökö* is also used for checking in Finland ("I check" = "minä sökötän").

The description below assumes that you are familiar with the general [game play](#) of [poker](#), and with [hand values](#) (both high and low variations). We also make no assumptions about what [betting structure](#) is used. Unlike seven-card stud, five-card stud plays very well at [no limit](#) and [pot limit](#), though [fixed limit](#) and [spread limit](#) games are still more common (with higher limits in the later betting rounds). It is typical to use a small [ante](#) and a [bring-in](#).

Description of play

Play begins with each player being dealt one card face down, followed by one card face up (beginning as usual with the player to the dealer's left). If played with a bring-in, the player with the lowest-ranking upcard must pay the bring in, and betting proceeds after that. If two players have equally ranked low cards, [suit rankings](#) may be used to break the

tie. If there is no bring-in, then the first betting round begins with the player showing the highest-ranking upcard, who may check. In this case, suit should not be used to break ties; if two players have the same high upcard, the one first in clockwise rotation from the dealer acts first.

After the first betting round is complete, another face-up card is dealt to each player (after a [burn card](#), starting with the player to the dealer's left, as will all subsequent rounds). Betting now begins with the player whose upcards make the best poker hand (since fewer than five cards are face up, this means no straights, flushes, or full houses). On this and subsequent betting rounds, the player to act first may check or bet up to the game's limit. The second betting round is followed by a third upcard to each player and a third betting round, again starting with the player with the best poker hand showing (thus, the first player to act on each round may change). A fourth face-up card and fourth betting round is followed by a showdown, if necessary (it usually won't be--most deals of five-card stud end early when a player bets and gets no calls).

Here's a sample deal. Assume that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing, Bob, who is sitting to her left, Carol to his left, and David to Carol's left. Alice deals one card face down to each player, followed by one card face up to each player, beginning with Bob and ending with herself. Bob is dealt the **4S**, Carol the **KD**, David the **4D**, and Alice the **9C**. Because they had earlier agreed to play with a \$1 bring-in, David is required to start the betting with a \$1 bring-in (his **4D** is lower than Bob's **4S** by suit). He has the option to open the betting for more, but he chooses to bet only the required \$1. The bring-in sets the current bet amount to \$1, so Alice cannot check. She decides to call. Bob folds, indicating this by turning his upcard face down and discarding his cards. Carol raises to \$3. David folds (forfeiting his bring-in), and Alice calls. Alice now deals a second face-up card to each remaining player: Carol is dealt the **JC**, and Alice the **KH**. Alice's two face-up cards make a poker hand of no pair, **K-9** high, and Carol has **K-J** high, so it is Carol's turn to bet. She checks, as does Alice, ending the betting round. Another face up card is dealt: Carol gets the **3H**, and Alice gets the **KC**. Alice now has a pair of kings showing, and Carol still has no pair, so Alice bets first. She bets \$5, and Carol folds. Alice wins the pot without a showdown.

High-low and other variants

The game can be played with low hand values, in which case the best low hand showing starts each betting round instead of the best high hand showing. Also, the highest-ranking card must pay the bring-in if it is played with a bring-in. If played high-low split, the highest showing hand always acts first.

The fifth and final card is dealt face down in some games. Otherwise play is identical (the player who acted first on round three will therefore act first again on round four since no one's exposed hand has changed). This game is described as "one down, three up, one down" or simply "1-3-1", while traditional five-card stud is called "one down, four up".

See [stud poker](#) for many more variations.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Roll your own

Roll your own is [poker jargon](#) used for a particular ruleset in certain [poker variants](#), particularly in [stud poker](#).

In traditional stud poker games, cards are simply dealt to each player, either face up or face down according to the rules of the game being played, followed by betting. In roll your own games this is different in one of three possible ways. These are called:

- simultaneous choose-after
- in turn choose-after
- choose-before

In *simultaneous choose-after* in every round where an upcard is normally dealt, each player is instead dealt a downcard. All players then look at all of their downcards and choose one to turn face up, then all players turn their chosen card at once.

In *in turn choose-after* the game begins the same way with each player being dealt a downcard, but then the first player to act (determined by the rules of the particular game) turns over his choice of upcard, then the next player can use that information to decide which of his cards to turn up, and then all players follow in turn.

Choose-before is always played in turn. On upcard rounds, before a card is dealt to each player, that player must choose whether he wants to receive it up or down. If he wants to receive it up, he says so. If he wants to receive it down, he must first turn one of his already-dealt downcards face up, so that all players will still have the same number of up and down cards. When using this method cards are not dealt to players starting at the dealer's left as usual, but start with the high hand showing.

Roll your own should not be confused with [rollouts](#), which, while similar, is fundamentally different.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Seven twenty-seven

Seven Twenty-Seven is a vying game similar in some respects to [poker](#), and often played as a "dealer's choice" variant at home poker games. It uses the same equipment and betting system, but the value of hands does not use traditional poker hand rankings, either high or low. Rather, only the sum of the cards is used to calculate the worth of a hand. The game is somewhat of a cross between blackjack hands and poker bluffing.

The game play proceeds like this:

- Each player is dealt a downcard and an upcard.
- A betting round begins with the player on the dealer's left, and proceeds exactly as in poker: all players must either equal the largest bet or drop out.
- After the betting, each player may draw a card, face up, in turn from the dealer's left. If all players pass on their opportunity to draw, there is one more round of betting, followed by a poker-style showdown. Otherwise the game continues with another betting round (often beginning to the left of the player who began

the previous round) and another draw, so there can be as few as two betting rounds in the game, but more often three or four.

Numbered cards are scored at face value; face cards count for one-half a point. Aces count for one and eleven, so a hand with a five and two aces scores 7 and 27 at the same time.

On showdown, the pot is split in half, with the hand(s) valued closest to 7 and the hand(s) valued closest to 27 each winning one half of the pot. If there is a tie where two players are off by the same amount, but in different directions (6 to 8), the lower hand wins. If there is an exact tie, that half-pot is split again among the tied players. Ties are common. The same player may contest for both high and low, usually because of aces. A player with a five and two aces can win the whole pot.

There are a few variations in rules that complicate things somewhat: first, the rule about ties in different directions varies; also, some players play with a [declaration](#), while others play [cards speak](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Seven-card stud

Seven-card stud is a [variant](#) of [stud poker](#). Until the recent increase in popularity of [Texas hold 'em](#), seven-card stud was the most popular poker variant in home games across the United States, and in casinos in the eastern part of the country. Seven-card stud is also played in western American casinos, but Texas hold 'em is far more popular there. Two to eight players can play.

The descriptions below assume that you are familiar with the general [game play](#) of [poker](#), and with [hand values](#). They also make no assumptions about what [poker betting structure](#) is used. In casino play, it is common to use a small [ante](#) and [bring-in](#). In home games, it is typical to use an ante only.

Quick play overview

Play proceeds as follows ("player" refers only to those who have not folded and are still in the game), with betting rounds in-between.

Betting is clockwise, the player with the highest poker hand showing starts (ie 2-2 beats K-Q).

- 2 cards dealt face down to each player, 1 card dealt face up
- upcard to each player
- upcard to each player
- upcard to each player
- downcard to each player
- showdown

Mnemonic: Two down, four up, one down.

In-depth play rules

The game begins with each player being dealt two cards face down and one card face up. If played with a bring-in, the player with the lowest-ranking upcard pays the bring-in, and betting proceeds after that in normal clockwise order. The bring-in is considered an [open](#), so the next player in turn may not check. If two players have equally ranked low cards, suit may be used to break the tie and assign the bring-in (see [high card by suit](#)). If there is no bring-in, then the first betting round begins with the player showing the highest-ranking upcard, who may check. In this case, suit should not be used to break ties. If two players have the same high upcard, the one first in clockwise rotation from the dealer acts first.

After the first betting round, another upcard is dealt to each player (after a [burn card](#), and starting at the dealer's left as will all subsequent rounds), followed by a second betting round beginning with the player whose upcards make the best poker hand. Since fewer than five cards are face up, this means no straights, flushes, or full houses will count for this purpose. On this and all subsequent betting rounds, the player whose face-up cards make the best poker hand will act first, and may check or bet up to the game's limit.

The second round is followed by a third upcard and betting round, a fourth upcard and betting round, and finally a downcard, a fifth betting round, and [showdown](#) if necessary. Seven-card stud can be summarized therefore as "two down, four up, one down". Upon showdown, each player makes the best five-card poker hand he can out of the seven cards he was dealt.

You may note that seven cards to eight players plus four burn cards makes 60 cards, and there are only 52 in the deck. In most games this is not a problem because several players will have folded in early betting rounds. But there are certainly low-stakes home games where few if any players fold. If this is the case in your game, you may want to limit the game to seven players. If the deck does become exhausted during play, previously-dealt burn cards can be used when only a few cards are needed to complete the deal. If even those are not sufficient, then on the final round instead of dealing a downcard to each player, a single [community card](#) is dealt to the center of the table, and is shared by everyone (that is, each player treats it as his seventh card). Under no circumstances can any discarded card from a folded hand be "recycled" for later use. Unlike draw poker, where no cards are ever seen before showdown, stud poker players use the information they get from face-up cards to make strategic decisions, and so a player who sees a certain card folded is entitled to make decisions knowing that the card will never appear in another opponent's hand.

Sample deal

The sample deal below assumes that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing in the examples; Bob, who is sitting to her left; Carol to his left; and David to Carol's left.

All players ante \$.25. Alice deals each player two downcards and one upcard, beginning with Bob and ending with herself. Bob is dealt the **4S**, Carol the **KD**, David the **4D**, and Alice

the **9C**. Because they are playing with a \$1 bring-in, David is required to start the betting with a \$1 bring-in (his **4D** is lower than Bob's **4S** by suit). He had the option to open the betting for more, but he chose to bet only the required \$1. The bring-in sets the current bet amount to \$1, so Alice cannot check. She decides to call. Bob folds, indicating this by turning his upcard face down and discarding his cards. Carol raises to \$3. David folds, and Alice calls.

Alice now deals a second face-up card to each remaining player: Carol is dealt the **JC**, and Alice the **KH**. Alice's two upcards make a poker hand of no pair, **K-9**-high, and Carol has **K-J**-high, so it is Carol's turn to bet. She checks, as does Alice, ending the betting round. Another face up card is dealt: Carol gets the **TH**, (T = 10) and Alice gets the **KC**. Alice now has a pair of kings showing, and Carol still has no pair, so Alice bets first. She bets \$5, and Carol calls. On the next round, Carol receives the **TD**, making her upcards **K-J-T-T**. Alice receives the **3S**. Alice's upcards are **9-K-K-3**; the pair of kings is still higher than Carol's pair of tens, so she bets \$5 and Carol calls. Each player now receives a downcard. It is still Alice's turn to bet because the downcard did not change either hand. She checks, Carol bets \$10, and Alice calls.

That closes the last betting round, and both players remain, so there is a showdown. Alice shows her cards: **9H 5D 9C KH KC 3S 5S**. The best five-card poker hand she can play is **K-K-9-9-5**, making [two pair](#), kings and nines. Carol shows **QS 2H KD JC TH TD AD**. She can play **A-K-Q-J-T**, making an ace-high [straight](#), and so Carol wins the pot.

See [stud poker](#) for many variations.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Twist

Twist is [poker jargon](#) for a round with specific rules which is sometimes used in the [poker variant stud poker](#).

One can replace any round of (or add a round to) a [stud poker](#) game with a twist round, in which each player is offered the option to replace exactly one card in his hand with a new one from the remaining deck stub. This is similar to the draw phase of [draw poker](#), differing in the following way: if the player chooses to replace a downcard, he discards it and is dealt a replacement card also face down; if he wishes to replace an upcard, he discards it and receives the replacement face up. On a twist round, players make the decision of which card to replace in turn starting with the player who bet first on the preceding round (usually the player whose upcards make the best hand), discarding the card they choose to replace, if any. After everyone has made their decision, the replacement cards are dealt starting at the dealer's left as usual.

Sometimes replacement cards are "bought" by requiring a player to add a fixed amount to the pot to be able to get a replacement.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Public cardroom rules

While specific rules vary from casino to casino, most public [poker](#) cardrooms have similar rules and regulations. Refer to the article on [betting](#) and the articles on [poker variants](#) for detailed discussion of the rules of poker gameplay.

Popular poker variants

While different casinos offer different poker variants, the most popular poker games offered in U.S. casinos include:

- [Texas hold 'em](#)
- [Seven-card stud](#)
- [Omaha hold 'em](#)

Casinos offer poker in [ring game](#) (cash game or live-action game) and [tournament](#) formats.

Waiting lists

Most casinos manage table seating on a first-come, first-served basis. During peak periods, there may be long waiting lists for poker seats. Players can normally be on multiple waiting lists (for different types of games and money amounts).

Chips

While cash often plays, [chips](#) are the primary currency of the game. These can usually be purchased from the casino employee dealing the game, or from cashier windows found around the casino.

Rake

The [rake](#) is the scaled commission fees taken by a casino operating a poker game. For ring games, it is generally 5-10% of each poker hand, up to a predetermined maximum amount, but not only can this percentage be anything, there are other non-percentage ways for a casino to take the rake. For tournaments, the rake is usually 10% of the buy-in. Poker is a player versus player game and the house does not wager against its players (unlike blackjack or roulette) so this fee is the principal mechanism to generate revenues.

Common rules

Aside from the particular rules of gameplay, some common rules in U.S. public cardrooms include:

- Players must act in turn. Players should not telegraph or otherwise indicate intentions to act prior to their turn to act.

- In the event of an action out-of-turn, the action may be binding if there is no bet, call or raise between the out-of-turn action and the player's proper turn.
- Verbal declarations are binding and take precedence over non-verbal actions.
- Betting actions without a verbal declaration must be made in a single motion or gesture ("no [string bet](#)" rule).
- Knocking or tapping the table is a check. Tossing or pushing cards away is a fold.
- If a player puts in chips equal to 50 percent or more of the minimum raise, he will be required to make a full minimum raise. Otherwise, the action is deemed a call and the excess chips should be returned to the player.
- In limit games, an oversized chip will be constituted to be a call if the player does not announce a raise. In no-limit, an oversized chip before the flop is a call; after the flop, an oversized chip by the initial bettor put in the pot will constitute the size of the bet. In pot-limit and no-limit, if a player states raise and throws in an oversized chip, the raise will be the maximum amount allowable up to the size of that chip.
- Bets should be placed in front of the player's cards. Chips should not be thrown ([splashed](#)) into the pot.
- Wagers must be at least the size of the previous bet or raise in that round, unless a player is going all-in.
- Hole cards, including folded hands, should not be revealed to other players until showdown. If a player reveals his hole cards to another player active in the current hand, all players have the right to also see the hole cards.
- Players may not verbally disclose the contents of their hand.
- Players may not advise other players how to play a hand ("[One player to a hand](#)" rule).
- Cards may not be removed or held below the table or otherwise concealed from view.
- Players must keep their highest denomination chips visible at all times.
- Except for small denominations used to tip for food or drinks, players may not remove a portion of their chips from the table (called [going south](#) or ratholing) unless they cash out and leave the game.
- [Cards speak](#) for themselves and prevail if a player mis-states the value of their hand at the showdown.
- Speaking in foreign languages at the table is prohibited.
- Players should not discuss or otherwise influence the hand-in-progress after folding.
- Cell-phone use at the table is prohibited.
- Profanity is prohibited.

Legality

The authority to operate public cardrooms in the U.S. is primarily prescribed by state laws, with some Federal laws covering tribal gaming. States usually limit public poker

cardrooms to casinos and parimutuel betting facilities (e.g., horse tracks, greyhound tracks, off-track betting (OTB) facilities, and Jai Alai frontons) or tribal reservations.

State laws may limit the type or nature of poker games offered in public cardrooms. For example, North Dakota has a limitation of \$25 per individual hand, game or event. Florida requires that all bets be no more than \$2; [ring games](#) in Florida cardrooms must use limit betting structures. In Florida, [poker tournaments](#) are exempted from the betting structure rules and may use any [betting structure](#) including no limit. Tournament formats are used to circumvent gambling rules in other states as well. Unlike some other forms of gambling, tribal gaming may be subject to state laws governing poker.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [One player to a hand](#) | [Poker dealer](#)

One player to a hand

In [poker](#), the **one player to a hand** rule is an important principle of fair play, and universal rule of casino play. It states that all game decisions about the play of each hand must be made by one player without assistance. This means, for example, that a player may not ask for advice from any other player or non-player during the play of the hand, nor should anyone offer such advice unsolicited. The phrase is often used as a warning to players making what might be perceived as minor violations, such as commenting upon other players' possible hands: Frank: *Gina, you think your [flush](#) is higher than Nick's?* Nick: *Hey, one player to a hand, Frank.*

Note that reading properly exposed hands of other players at showdown is not a violation of this rule, since no further decisions can be made. See [Cards speak](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker dealer

A **poker dealer** distributes [cards](#) to players and manages the action at a [poker](#) table.

Professional dealers

Any casino with a poker room must hire a staff of dealers. Casinos generally pay dealers minimum wage. However, a dealer's primary source of income is not salary, but tips from players. Tip income may be substantial for dealers who can deal hands quickly and efficiently, and are selected by the casino to deal in [higher limit](#) games.

To become employable by a casino, applicants without prior experience are typically required to complete a 4-6 week training program at a dealing school. Dealing in a casino may require working late hours and remaining seated for long periods of time. Dealers also commonly work holidays, since these are especially busy days for casinos. Having to deal

with difficult individuals may be another drawback to dealing at a casino—some players are abusive to dealers.

[Major poker tournaments](#) also hire dealers. For a given tournament stop, the tournament coordinator will hire dealers on contract for the duration of the tournament, which may be a few days to a few weeks. Room and board may or may not be provided by the tournament management; the dealer is typically responsible for his own travel expenses.

Mechanics of dealing

Dealers must be proficient in shuffling the deck, distributing the cards to the players, and, if required by the game being dealt, turning up the [community cards](#) in the center of the table. There are two methods of distributing the cards, "American"-style and "European"-style.

Shuffling

To shuffle the cards, the dealer follows a sequence defined by the casino. First all cards are spread out on the table and pushed around randomly. This is called "scrambling" or "washing" the cards. Then the cards are collected and squared into a deck. At this point a typical shuffling sequence might be: riffle, riffle, box, riffle. Professional dealers always keep both halves of the deck very low to the table while shuffling.

Finally, a cut card is placed on the table and the deck is cut onto the card. The cut card is held on the bottom of the deck for the entire hand, to keep the bottom card from being exposed.

Shuffling machines have been introduced in some poker rooms. Two decks are constantly in play; one is dealt while the other is shuffled in the machine. To begin a new deal, the dealer removes the shuffled deck from the machine, cuts it, and begins dealing. The machines speed up play, simplify the dealer's work, and also add some security to the game, since the machine counts the cards between every hand.

American-style dealing

In American-style dealing, the deck is held in one hand, and the dealer pinches the front-right corner of the top card between the other thumb and index finger. The card is then thrown to the player, with a wrist extending motion.

The positioning of the throwing wrist is critical, since the cards must be maintained low and level with the table surface, so that players at the table can not see the undersides of the cards.

American-style dealers may use a completely different dealing motion to deliver cards to the one-seat (the player seated immediately to the dealer's left), and sometimes the two-seat (two seats to the dealer's left), since these are awkward to reach for a right handed dealer with the dealing motion described above.

European-style dealing

European-style dealers touch only the top of each card being dealt. The card is pushed off the top of the deck to the table surface in front of the dealer. The dealer then propels the card toward the recipient, usually imparting some spin to the card for stability.

Burning and turning

Before dealing a community card, the top card off the deck is [burned](#), or thrown in the discard pile. The rationale for burning is that the top card on the deck is visible to players during the previous betting round, so that a [cheat](#) might be able to spot a mark on the top card and therefore gain an advantage on his opponents.

When burning, the deck must be held low and the burn card kept level with the table surface. Casinos watch carefully to make sure a dealer does not "flash", or inadvertently expose, the burn cards to players at the table.

In [flop](#) games, the three community cards comprising the [flop](#) are turned up simultaneously, never one at a time.

Responsibilities during a hand

Dealers control the action during a hand. This may include prodding players to act, verbally announcing actions of players to the rest of the table, and correcting players who act out of turn.

Dealers also must manage the [pot](#). The dealer must verify the amount of bets and raises by players, collect folded hands, maintain side pots, and read player's hands at showdown to identify the winner or winners. In games with a [rake](#), the dealer also must keep track of the amount of money in the pot and remove the appropriate cut for the house.

At times the dealer needs to communicate with the floor, or other casino staff. Some casinos equip the dealers with a headset or walkie-talkie for this purpose, while in other casinos the dealer must shout over the ambient noise. The following table shows some common calls a dealer may make, and their meanings:

Call - Meaning

"Floor" or "Decision" - Requests the floor manager to come to resolve a dispute.

"Seat open" - Announces that a player has left the game and a seat is now available.

"Player in" - Notifies the pit boss that a vacant seat has been filled.

"Players checks" - Requests a chip runner to retrieve chips for a player.

"Fill" - Requests a chip runner to bring chips to fill the dealer tray. This tray must be kept full of low denomination chips in a high limit game, so that change may be made in the pot so that the rake may be taken out.

"Set up" - Requests replacement decks be brought to the table.

"Pick up" - For cash games, used when an absent player's chips should be removed from the table to free the seat. Also, for single-table [satellites](#), used to request the staff to come collect the cash entry fees from the table.

"Winner" - Used in single-table satellites to announce that the game has completed and the prize is to be paid.

"Brush" - Calls pit boss to deal with a game participation problem, for example if a game must be broken due to insufficient players.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Cheating in poker

Cheating in poker is any behavior outside the rules intended to give an unfair advantage to one or more players.

Since [poker](#) has a wide variety of rules and procedures, hands are played fairly quickly, and numerous people are involved in games, the occurrence of cheating is common. Cheating can be done many ways, including collusion, sleight-of-hand such as bottom dealing or stacking the deck, or the use of physical objects such as marked cards or holdout devices.

Cheating occurs in both friendly games or casinos. Cheats may operate alone, but also may operate in teams or small groups.

Following is a list of terms used to categorize specific card cheats:

- card mechanic -- A card cheat who specializes in sleight-of-hand manipulation of cards, a card sharp.
- base dealer/second dealer -- Also called bottom dealer/second dealer is a cheat that specializes in bottom/second dealing.
- paper player -- A card cheat that exploits the use of marked cards.
- hand mucker -- A card cheat that specializes in switching cards.
- machine player -- A card cheat that uses mechanical holdouts.

Minimal-skill methods

The easiest and most common types of cheating require no ability of manipulation, but rather merely the nerve. Such methods include shorting the pot, avoiding house fees and peeking at other player's cards. However, it is very difficult to prove because when confronted, the first time at least, the cheat often calls the cheating an honest mistake.

One minimal skill method that occurs in non-casino games happens when a player who has folded appoints himself the tender of the pot, stacking chips, counting them, and delivering them to the winning player. *Check-chopping* is when such a "helpful" player palms a chip. Odorless adhesive can be used for this purpose.

Marked cards

Marked cards are printed or altered so that the cheater can know their value while only looking at the back. The ways of marking are too numerous to mention, but there are certain broad types. A common way of marking cards involves marks on a round design on the card so as to be read like a clock (an ace is marked at one o'clock and so on until the king which is not marked). Shading a card by putting it in the sun or scratching the surface with a razor are ways to mark an already printed deck.

Juice is a substance used to mark cards in a subtle way so as to avoid detection. Once trained, cheaters can read them from across the table.

Decks can be marked while playing using fingernails or by bending or *crimping* the cards in a position that the cheat can read from across the table.

Skilled methods

A cheat may *hand-muck*, that is, switch their hand with one they have secretly hidden. This may also be done with a confederate.

A skilled cheat can deal the second card, the bottom card, the second from bottom card, and the middle card. The idea is to *cull*, or to find the cards one needs, place them at the bottom, top, or any other place the cheat wants, then false deal them to oneself or one's confederate.

One sign of false dealing could be when a dealer grips the deck with the index finger in front of it. This is referred to as the mechanic's grip. It not only allows better control of the cards, but provides cover as, showing the back of the top card, and without moving the hand holding the deck.

Even if a cheat deals himself a powerful hand, he may not win much money if every other player has nothing, so often the cheat will stack two hands, with one player getting a strong hand and the cheater getting an even stronger one.

One method of cheating that involves both great risk and great potential pay-off is the *cold deck* – so called because it has not been "warmed up" by play (and thus randomised). Such decks are usually pre-stacked, and are introduced either at the deal, after the real deck has been shuffled, or before the deal, where a card sharp will make a false shuffle using sleight of hand. The latter method may require collusion if the style of play or house rules call for a cut. The skill lies both in convincing other players that the shuffle is legitimate and in ensuring that other players receive hands that are good enough to entice them into play, but not too good to arouse suspicion.

Collusion

A common form of cheating is with a partner or many partners, this is called *collusion*. Collusion is two or more players acting with a secret, common strategy. Some common forms of collusion are *soft play*, that is, failing to bet or raise in a situation that would normally merit it because you don't want to cost your partner money; *whipsawing*, where partners raise and reraise each other to trap players in between; *dumping*, where a cheater

will deliberately lose to a partner; and *signalling* that is, trading information between partners via signals of some sort.

Simple collusion in [online poker](#) is relatively easy and much more difficult to immediately spot if executed well. Cheaters can engage in telephone calls or instant messaging discussing their cards with no one looking at them. Sometimes one person can be using two or more computers and playing under different aliases. This gives him an advantage that's difficult to work against. However, online poker cardrooms keep records of every hand played, and collusion can often be detected by finding any of several detectable patterns.

Another concern in online poker is the use of [bots](#). These are programs that play instead of a real human. Though their accuracy and their ability to actually win are in dispute, their use does violate the rules of the cardrooms so using them is by definition cheating.

In a [poker tournament](#), when one player is all in and two other players are active in the pot, it is common for the two players with chips left to "check it down". Unless they explicitly agree to communicate an agreement about checking it down, this is not collusion.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Rule variations

Rule variations in [poker](#).

Overview

There are many types of poker games. While poker was originally played with each player receiving five cards and only one betting round, it has expanded to include hundreds of variants. Currently, the most popular one is [Texas Hold'em](#), but other variants are very popular.

Here are some common rule variations:

1. [High-low split](#): the highest and lowest hands split the pot. Generally there is a qualifier for the low hand. For example, the low hand must have 5 cards with ranks of 8 or less. In most high-low games the usual rank of poker hands is observed, so that an unsuited broken straight (7-5-4-3-2) wins low (see Morehead, Official Rules of Card Games). In a variant, based on Lowball, where only the low hand wins, a straight or a flush does not matter for a low hand. So the best low hand is 5-4-3-2-A, suited or not.
2. Players can pass cards to each other. An example of this would be [Anaconda](#).
3. 'Kill game'. When a fixed limit game is played and a player wins two pots in a row, the stakes are doubled.
4. [Wild cards](#) are added. This can range from simply making deuces wild to the wild 7-stud variant of baseball.

5. A [twist](#) round in which players can buy another card from the deck. If a player does not like their card, they can purchase another one by adding money to the pot. This is sometimes called a "Tittle."
6. A [stripped deck](#) may be used. Poker was first played with only 20 cards. In the spirit of poker history, players will sometimes only play with a stripped deck. A popular poker game in Spain is played with cards 8-A. It is played similar to hold'em, except that one card is dealt at a time and you must use both of your hole cards.
7. Each player is dealt a certain amount of cards. Then there is usually a number of [community cards](#) that all players can use. When forming a poker hand a player may use cards from his hand and the "community cards". Examples of community card poker include [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold 'em](#)

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [High-low split](#) | [Anaconda](#) | [Kill game](#) | [Wild card](#) | [Twist](#) | [Stripped deck](#) | [Community card](#)

High-low split

In traditional [poker](#) games, the player with the best traditional [hand](#) wins the whole pot. [Lowball](#) variations award the pot to the lowest hand, by any of several methods (see [Low hand \(poker\)](#)). **High-low split** games are those in which the pot is divided between the player with the best traditional hand (called the [high hand](#)) and the player with the [low hand](#).

There are two common methods for playing high-low split games, called [declaration](#) and [cards speak](#). In a declaration game, each player declares (either verbally or using markers such as chips) whether he wishes to contest for the high hand or the low hand. The lowest hand among those who declared low wins that half of the pot, and the highest hand among those who declared high wins that half (for further details, see [declaration](#)). In a cards speak game, all players simply reveal their cards at [showdown](#) and the hands are evaluated by all players; high hand wins half of the pot and low hand wins the other half.

Especially when using the [ace-to-five low](#) method, it is possible for one player to have both the low hand and the high hand, and therefore win all of the pot (called "scooping," "hogging" the pot, or "going pig"). In the event more than one player ties for either high or low, the pot can be further split into quarters or smaller fractions. For example, if one player has the high hand on showdown, and two other players tie for the best low hand, the high hand wins half of the pot and each low hand wins only a quarter of the pot.

It is common, especially in cards speak games, to require a certain hand value or better to win the low half of the pot, called a **qualifier**. For example in an "eight or better to qualify low" game, a player with an eight-high hand (or better low such as seven-high) is entitled to win the low half of the pot (assuming his hand defeats all other low hands), but a player with a 10-high or 9-high hand cannot win, even if his hand is the lowest. In this case, the high hand wins the entire pot. There is generally no qualifier to win high, although one

common variant is **any pair/no pair**, where a hand of at least a pair is required to win high and any hand with [no pair](#) is required to win low.

In high-low split games where each player is dealt more than five cards, each player chooses five of his cards to play as his high hand, and/or five of his cards to play as his low hand. The sets may overlap: for example, in [seven-card stud](#) played high-low split, a player dealt 7-7-6-4-4-3-2 can play a high hand of 7-7-4-4-6 (two pair, sevens and fours) and a low hand of 7-6-4-3-2 (seven-high).

Note that [bluffs](#) can be especially powerful in high-low split games, because a player making a successful bluff wins the whole pot rather than having to share it. This fact also makes bluffs less likely to succeed.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Wild card

[Poker](#) games may contain one or more cards designated as **wild**. These may be jokers, or they may be normal ranked and suited cards pressed into wild card duty ("deuces wild" is a common variant). There are two rules in common use regarding wildcards: "fully wild" cards and the [bug](#).

A card that is fully wild can be designated by its holder as any card he chooses with no restrictions. Under this rule, for example, a hand with any natural pair and a wild card becomes three of a kind. The common rule in casinos is that a wild card plays as a bug, which is given the rank of ace unless designating it as a different card would complete a [straight](#), [flush](#), or [straight flush](#). Under this rule, a hand such as K-K-Joker-5-2 is just a pair of kings (with an ace kicker), but any four same-suit cards with a bug make a flush, and a hand such as 7-Joker-5-4-3 makes a straight.

Two exceptions to standard poker practice sometimes seen in home games are the [double-ace flush](#) rule, and the natural wins rule. The latter rule states that between hands that would otherwise tie, the hand with fewer wild cards wins. This is not common in casinos and should be treated as an exception to standard practice (as is the double-ace flush).

There is a tendency among some players to regard wild cards as "impure" or treat wild card games as silly or amateurish. While it is certainly true that a game with too many wild cards can become so random that all skill is lost, the occasional use of wild cards is a good way to add variation to a game and add opportunities for skillful play. In particular, [five-card draw](#) is traditionally played with a joker in California (which plays as a bug), and also plays well with deuces fully wild. [Seven-card stud](#) plays well with one or two bugs, especially when played [high-low split](#). Other games such as [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold'em](#) do not play well with wild cards. For some players, the problem with wild-card games is that the winner is almost always the hand with the most wild cards, making the other cards irrelevant, and making skill less important.

Another issue with wild cards is that they distort the hand frequencies. In 5-card stud, the stronger hands are less frequent than the weaker hands; i.e., no pair is most common,

followed by one pair, two pair, three of a kind, etc. When you add wild cards, the stronger hands gain frequency while the weaker hands lose frequency. For example, if you have a pair and a wild card, you will always choose three of a kind rather than two pair. This causes three of a kind to be more common than two pair.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Bug](#)

Bug

A **bug** in [poker](#) is a limited form of [wild card](#). One or both jokers are often added to the deck and played as bugs.

The bug is played as an ace unless it can be used as missing card to complete a [straight](#) or [flush](#). For example, the hand **K-K-X-5-2** is just a pair of kings (with an ace kicker), but any four same-suit cards with a bug make a flush, and a hand such as **7-X-5-4-3** makes a straight.

In [draw poker](#), when a bug is in play, this makes the highest possible [hand](#) five aces, rather than a royal flush, and also increases the odds of improving a hand when drawing to three of a kind with an ace kicker.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Stripped deck

A **stripped deck** is a set of [playing cards](#) from which cards have been removed. This kind of deck is used in certain [poker variants](#), and the cards that are removed are usually low-ranking ones. For example, the Australian game of [Manila](#) uses a 32-card deck in which all cards below the rank of **7** are removed, and [Mexican stud](#) is played with the **8s**, **9s**, and **10s** removed from the deck (and a joker added). This may require adjusting hand values: in both of these games, a [flush](#) ranks above a [full house](#), because having fewer cards of each suit available makes flushes rarer.

A hand such as **6-7-J-Q-K** plays as a [straight](#) in Mexican stud, skipping over the removed ranks. Some places may allow a hand such as **10-9-8-7-A** to play as a straight (by analogy to a [wheel](#)) in the 32-card game, the **A** playing low and skipping over the removed ranks (although this is not the case in Manila). Finally, the relative frequency of straights versus [three of a kind](#) is also sensitive to the deck composition (and to the number of cards dealt), so some places may play that trips beat a straight, but the difference is small enough that this complication isn't necessary for most games.

[Five-card stud](#) is often played with a stripped deck as well, usually the same 32-card deck as Manila (with all cards of rank **2** through **6** removed). In lively home games it might work better to only strip three ranks (**2s** through **4s**) with seven or eight players; with only two or three players **7s** and **8s** could be stripped as well, leaving the same 24-card deck used in euchre. In any of these cases, a flush should rank above a full house (in the 24-card

case it's actually more rare than [four of a kind](#), but is rarely played that way). It should be noted that stripped deck five-card stud is a game particularly well-suited to cheating by collusion, because it is easy for partners to signal a single hole card and the relative value of knowing the location of a single card is higher than with a full deck.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Community card

In [poker](#), a **community card** (also called a **shared card** or **window card**) is a card that is dealt face-up to the table (not to any particular player), and is shared by more than one player.

For example, if one individual player holds a hand of K-7-3-3, and there is a "K" as a community card, then that player's hand plays as [Two pair](#) (K-K-3-3-7) upon [showdown](#). If another player with the same shared K held cards of A-Q-J-10, his hand upon showdown would be the ace-high [Straight](#) A-K-Q-J-10.

Often, several community cards are dealt to the table, shared by all players, and subject to variant-specific rules about how many, and which of the cards may be used in each player's hand. Such a set of community cards is often called a "board" or "widow" (though this latter term is inconsistent with its use in other card games). The board is usually dealt in a simple line, but some games may have elaborate layouts of community cards with special rules about what combinations can be used. For example, the game, [Texas hold'em](#), ends with each player holding two cards in his individual hand, and a board of five community cards in a simple line shared by everyone; each player then plays the best five-card hand, he can make out of the two in his hand, combined with the five he shares in any combination. In [Omaha hold'em](#), game rules restrict players to using exactly three (no more and no fewer) of the five community cards, combined with exactly two of the four cards dealt to each player, to make a hand. In Tic-tac-toe, the board is a 3x3 array of nine cards, and players must use exactly three cards from a row, column, or diagonal of the board.

Many Community card games are strategically interesting because shared cards can give players hands of similar value, making skilled play, important. For example, when the five community cards on a Texas hold'em board include four of one suit, any player with a card of that suit in his hand can play a [Flush](#) (but the one with the highest-ranking card of that suit is likely to have the best flush and win).

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Omaha hold' em poker](#) | [Texas hold' em poker](#) | [Turn](#)

Turn

The **turn**, or fourth street, in [poker](#) is the fourth of five cards dealt to the board, constituting one face-up community card that each of the players in the game can use to make up their final hand.

Typically found in [community card poker](#) games like [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold 'em](#), the turn follows the completion of the second round of [betting](#) after the [flop](#), and is immediately followed by a third round of betting which concludes with the [river](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker strategy

Poker strategy is a complex subject. This article only attempts to introduce basic strategy concepts.

The fundamental theorem of poker

The [fundamental theorem of poker](#) states that every time you play your hand the way you would if you could see your opponent's cards, you gain, and every time your opponent plays his cards differently from the way he would play them if he could see your cards, you gain.^[1] This theorem is the foundation for many poker strategy topics. For example, bluffing and slow-playing (explained below) are examples of using deception to induce your opponents to play differently than they would if they could see your cards. There are some exceptions to the fundamental theorem in certain multi-way pot situations, as described in [Morton's theorem](#).

See the articles on the [fundamental theorem of poker](#) and [Morton's theorem](#) for more details.

Pot odds and poker probabilities

The relationship between [pot odds](#) and [odds of winning](#) is one of the most important concepts in poker strategy. **Pot odds** are the ratio of the size of the bet required to stay in the pot to the size of the pot.^[1] For example, if a player must call a \$10 bet for a chance to win a \$40 pot (not including his \$10 call), his pot odds are 1-to-4 (20% probability). To have a positive expectation, a player's *odds of winning* must be at least equal to his pot odds. Continuing the previous example, if the player's odds of winning are also 1-to-4, if he plays the pot five times, he puts in \$10 five times, loses four times and wins \$50 once (breaking even).

See the article on [pot odds](#) for a more about including manipulating pot odds, implied pot odds, effective implied odds, and reverse implied odds.

See the article on [poker probability](#) for more about determining the odds of having (or improving to) the best hand.

Deception

By employing deception, a poker player hopes to induce his opponent(s) to [act](#) differently than they would if they could see his cards. **Bluffing** is a form of deception to induce opponents to fold superior hands. Against observant opponents, it is necessary for a player to bluff *sometimes* to induce opponents to call his bets when he actually does have a superior hand. If opponents observe that a player never bluffs, they won't call his bets unless they have very good hands. **Slow-playing** (also called "sandbagging") is deceptive play in poker that is roughly the opposite of bluffing: betting weakly with a strong holding rather than betting strongly with a weak one.

See the article on [bluffing](#) for more about bluffing strategies, semi-bluffs, and optimal bluffing frequency.

See the article on [slow playing](#) for more about slow playing strategies.

Position

Position refers to the order in which players are seated around the table and the strategic consequences of this. Generally, players in earlier [position](#) (who have to act first) need stronger hands to bet or raise than players in later position. For example, if there are five opponents yet to act behind a player, there is a greater chance one of the opponents will have a better hand than if there was only one opponent yet to act. Being in late position is an advantage because a player gets to see how his opponents in earlier position acted (which provides the player more information about their hands than they have about his).

See the article on [position](#) for more about positional play.

Reasons to raise

Unlike calling, raising has an extra way to win: opponent(s) may fold. An opening bet may be considered a raise from a strategy perspective. Sklansky gives seven reasons for raising, summarized below.^[1]

- **To get more money in the pot when a player has the best hand:** If a player has the best hand, *raising for value* enables him to win a bigger pot.
- **To drive out opponents when a player has the best hand:** If a player has a [made hand](#), raising may [protect](#) his hand by driving out opponents with [drawing hands](#) who may otherwise improve to a better hand.
- **To bluff or semi-bluff:** If a player raises with an inferior or drawing hand, the player may induce a better hand to fold. In the case of semi-bluff, if the player is called, he still has a chance to improve to a better hand (and also win a larger pot).
- **To get a free card:** If a player raises with a drawing hand, his opponent may check to him on the next betting round, giving him a chance to get a free card to improve his hand.
- **To gain information:** If a player raises with an uncertain hand, he gains information about the strength of his opponent's hand if he is called. Players may use an opening bet on a later betting round (*probe* or *continuation* bets) to gain information by being called or raised (or may win the pot immediately).
- **To drive out worse hands when a player's own hand may be second best:** Sometimes, if a player raises with the second best hand with cards to come, raising to drive out opponents with worse hands (but who might improve) may increase the expected value of his hand by giving him a higher probability of winning in the event his hand improves.
- **To drive out better hands when a come hand bets:** If an opponent with an apparent come hand (drawing hand) bets before a player, if the player raises,

opponents behind him who may have a better hand may fold rather than call a bet and raise. This is a form of [isolation](#) play.

Reasons to call

There are several reasons for calling a bet or raise, summarized below.

- **To see more cards:** With a drawing hand, a player may be receiving the correct pot odds with the call to see more cards.
- **To limit loss in equity:** Calling may be appropriate to when a player has adequate pot odds to call but will lose equity on money contributed to the pot.
- **To avoid a re-raise:** Calling denies the original bettor the opportunity of re-raising.
- **To conceal the strength of a player's hand:** If a player has a very strong hand, he might smooth call on an early betting round to avoid giving away the strength of his hand on the hope of getting more money into the pot in later betting rounds.
- **To manipulate pot odds:** By calling (not raising), a player offers any opponents yet to act behind him more favorable pot odds to also call. For example, if a player has a very strong hand, a *smooth call* may encourage opponents behind him to *overcall*, building the pot. Particularly in limit games, building the pot in an earlier betting round may induce opponents to call future bets in later betting rounds because of the pot odds they will be receiving.
- **To set up a bluff on a later betting round:** Sometimes referred to as a *long-ball bluff*, calling on an earlier betting round can set up a bluff (or semi-bluff) on a later betting round.^[2]

Gap concept

The **gap concept** states that a player needs a better hand to play against someone who has already opened the betting than he would need to open himself.^[3] The gap concept reflects that players prefer to avoid confrontations with another player who has already indicated strength, and that calling only has one way to win (by having the best hand), whereas opening (or raising) may also win immediately if your opponent(s) fold.

Sandwich effect

Related to the gap effect, the *sandwich effect* states that a player needs a stronger hand to stay in a pot when there are opponents yet to act behind him.^[2] Because the player doesn't know how many opponents will be involved in the pot or whether he will have to call a re-raise, he doesn't know what his effective pot odds actually are. Therefore, a stronger hand is desired as compensation for this uncertainty.

Loose/tight play

Loose players play relatively more hands and tend to continue with weaker hands. **Tight** players play relatively fewer hands and tend not to continue with weaker hands. The following concepts are applicable in loose games (and their inverse in tight games):[\[1\]](#)

- Bluffs and semi-bluffs are less effective because loose opponents are less likely to fold.
- Requirements for continuing with made hands may be lower because loose players may also be playing lower value hands.
- Drawing to incomplete hands, like flushes, tends to be more valuable as draws will often get favorable pot odds and a stronger hand (rather than merely one pair) is often required to win in multi-way pots.

Aggressive/passive play

Aggressive play refers to betting and raising. **Passive** play refers to checking and calling. Unless passive play is being used deceptively as mentioned above, aggressive play is generally considered stronger than passive play because of the bluff value of bets and raises and because it offers more opportunities for your opponents to make mistakes.[\[1\]](#)

See the article on [aggressive](#) play for more details.

Hand reading and tells

Hand reading is the process of making educated guesses about the possible cards an opponent may hold based on the sequence of actions in the pot. A **tell** is a detectable change in an opponent's behavior or demeanor that gives clues about his hand. Educated guesses about an opponent's cards can help a player avoid mistakes in his own play, induce mistakes by his opponent(s), or to influence the player to take actions that he would normally not take under the circumstances. For example, a tell might suggest an opponent has missed a draw and holds a weak hand, but a player also missed a draw and is sure his hand is even weaker. In this case, using the tell, the player may decide a bluff would be more effective than usual.

See the article on [tells](#) for more information.

Table image and opponent profiling

By observing the tendencies and patterns of your opponents, you can make more educated guesses about their potential holdings. For example, if a player has been playing extremely tight (playing very few hands), when they finally do enter a pot, you may surmise that they have stronger than average cards. Your **table image** is the perception of your opponents of your own pattern of play. You can leverage your table image by playing out of character and thereby inducing your opponent(s) to misjudge your hand and make a mistake.

Equity

A player's **equity** in a pot is his expected share of the pot, expressed either as a percentage (probability of winning) or expected value (amount of pot * probability of winning). **Negative equity**, or **loss in equity**, occurs when contributing to a pot with a probability of winning less than $1 / (\text{number of opponents matching the contribution})$.

Example

Alice contributes \$12 to a pot and is matched by two other opponents. Alice's \$12 contribution "bought" the chance to win \$36. If Alice's probability of winning is 50%, her equity in the \$36 pot is \$18 (a gain in equity because her \$12 is now "worth" \$18). If her probability of winning is only 10%, Alice loses equity because her \$12 is now only "worth" \$3.60.

If there is already money in the pot, the [pot odds](#) associated with a particular play may indicate a *positive expected value* even though it may have *negative equity*.

Texas hold'em example

Alice holds **JD** 7S. Bob holds **KH** 6S. After the flop, the board is **5H 6H 8D**. If both hands are played to a [showdown](#), Alice has a 45% chance to win, Bob has a 53% chance to win and there is a 2% chance to split the pot. The pot currently has \$51. Alice goes all-in for \$45 and is certain that Bob will call. Alice's implied pot odds for the all-in raise are 32%. Bob's simple pot odds for the call are also 32%. Since both have a probability of winning greater than 32%, both plays (the raise and the call) have a positive expectation. However, since Bob has more equity in the pot than Alice (53% vs. 45%), Alice would have been better off playing the pot as cheaply as possible. When Alice raised, she gave up the difference in equity on the money she contributed to the pot.

Short-handed considerations

When playing **short-handed** (at a table with fewer than normal players), players must loosen up their play (play more hands) for several reasons:^[4]

- There is less likelihood of another player having a strong hand because there are fewer players.
- Each player's share of the [forced bets](#) increases because there are fewer players contributing to the forced bets, thus waiting for premium hands becomes more expensive.

Structure considerations

The [blinds and antes](#) and limit structure of the game has a significant influence on poker strategy. For example, it is easier to manipulate pot odds in no-limit and pot-limit games than in limit games. In tournaments, as the size of the forced bets relative to the chip stacks grows, pressure is placed on players to play pots to avoid being anted/blinded away.^[4]

Notes

1. ^ [a b c d e f](#) David Sklansky (1987). *The Theory of Poker*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685000.
2. ^ [a b](#) Dan Harrington and Bill Robertie (2004). *Harrington on Hold'em: Expert Strategy For No-Limit Tournaments; Volume I: Strategic Play*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685337.
3. ^ David Sklansky (2001). *Tournament Poker for Advanced Players*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685280.
4. ^ Dan Harrington and Bill Robertie (2005). *Harrington on Hold'em: Expert Strategy For No-Limit Tournaments; Volume II: The Endgame*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685353.

[Home](#) | [Fundamental theorem of poker](#) | [Morton's theorem](#) | [Pot odds](#) | [Poker play](#) | [Poker probability](#) | [Poker psychology](#) | [Poker gameplay and terminology](#) | [Value](#)

Fundamental theorem of poker

The **fundamental theorem of poker** is a principle first articulated by David Sklansky that he believes expresses the essential nature of [poker](#) as a game of decision-making in the face of incomplete information.

Every time you play a hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see all your opponents' cards, they gain; and every time you play your hand the same way you would have played it if you could see all their cards, they lose. Conversely, every time opponents play their hands differently from the way they would have if they could see all your cards, you gain; and every time they play their hands the same way they would have played if they could see all your cards, you lose.

The Fundamental Theorem is stated in common language, but its formulation is based on mathematical reasoning. Each decision that is made in poker can be analyzed in terms of the concept of expected value. The expected value expresses the average payoff of a decision if the decision is made a large number of times. The correct decision to make in a given situation is the decision that has the largest expected value. (Although sometimes it is correct not to choose this decision for the larger goal of long-term deception.) If you could see all your opponents' cards, you would always be able to calculate the correct decision with mathematical certainty. (This is certainly true heads-up, but is not always true in multi-way pots.) The less you deviate from these correct decisions, the better your expected long-term results. This is the mathematical expression of the Fundamental Theorem.

An example

Here is an example that illustrates how the Fundamental Theorem is applied. (This example assumes a familiarity with the basic rules and terminology of [Texas hold 'em](#).)

Suppose you are playing limit holdem and are dealt **9C 9S** under the gun before the flop. You call, and everyone folds to the big blind who checks. The flop comes **AC KD 10D**, and the big blind bets.

You now have a decision to make based upon incomplete information. In this particular circumstance, the correct decision is almost certainly to fold. There are too many turn and river cards that could kill your hand. Even if the big blind does not have an **A** or a **K**, there are 3 cards to a straight and 2 cards to a flush on the flop, and she could easily be on a straight or flush draw. You are essentially drawing to 2 outs (another **9**), and even if you catch one of these outs, your set may not hold up.

However, suppose you knew (with 100% certainty) the big blind held **8D 7D**. In this case, it would be correct to *raise*. Even though the big blind would still be getting the correct pot odds to call, the best decision is to raise. (Calling would be giving the big blind infinite pot odds, and this decision makes less money in the long run than raising.) Therefore, by folding (or even calling), you have played your hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see your opponent's cards, and so by the Fundamental Theorem of Poker, she has gained. You have made a "mistake", in the sense that you have played differently from the way you would have played if you knew the big blind held **8D 7D**, even though this "mistake" is almost certainly the best decision given the incomplete information available to you.

This example also illustrates that one of the most important goals in poker is to induce your opponents to make mistakes. In this particular hand, the big blind has practiced deception by employing a semi-bluff—she has bet a hand, hoping you will fold, but she still has outs even if you call or raise. She has induced you to make a mistake.

Multi-way pots and implicit collusion

The Fundamental Theorem of Poker applies to all heads-up decisions, but it does not apply to all multi-way decisions. This is because each opponent of a player can make an incorrect decision, but the "collective decision" of all the opponents works against the player.

This type of situation occurs mostly in games with multi-way pots, when a player has a strong hand, but several opponents are chasing with draws or other weaker hands. Sometimes such a situation is referred to as **implicit collusion**. Experts disagree on the prevalence of implicit collusion in particular games, as well as the extent to which implicit collusion might be unethical.

The Fundamental Theorem of Poker is simply expressed and appears axiomatic, yet its proper application to the countless varieties of circumstances that a poker player may face requires a great deal of knowledge, skill, and experience.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Morton's theorem

Morton's theorem is a [poker](#) principle articulated by Andy Morton. It states that in multiway [pots](#), a player's expectation may be maximized by an opponent making a correct decision.

The most common application of Morton's theorem occurs when one player holds the best hand, but there are two or more opponents on [draws](#). In this case, the player with the best hand might make more money in the long run when an opponent folds to a bet, *even if that opponent is folding correctly and would be making a personal mistake to call the bet*. This type of situation is sometimes referred to as *implicit collusion*.

Morton's theorem should be contrasted with the [fundamental theorem of poker](#), which states that a player wants his opponents to make decisions which minimize their own expectation. The discrepancy between the two "theorems" occurs because of the presence of more than one opponent. Whereas the fundamental theorem always applies heads-up (one opponent), it does not always apply in multiway pots. The scope of Morton's theorem in multiway situations is a subject of controversy. For example, Morton himself expresses the belief that the fundamental theorem rarely applies to multiway situations.

An example

The following example is credited to Morton, who first posted on [rec.gambling.poker](#). (Some numbers have been changed to allow for complete information, see below.)

Suppose in limit [holdem](#) a player holds **ADKC** and the flop is **KS9H3H**, giving the player top pair with best kicker. When the betting on the [flop](#) is complete, the player has two opponents remaining, one of whom he knows has the [nut flush draw](#) (for example, **AHTH**, giving him 9 [outs](#)) and one of whom the player believes holds second pair with random kicker (for example **QC9C**, 4 outs), leaving the player with all the remaining cards in the deck as his outs. The [turn](#) card is an apparent blank (for example **6D**) and the [pot](#) size at that point is P , expressed in big bets.

When the player bets the turn, opponent A , holding the flush draw, is sure to call and is almost certainly getting the correct [pot odds](#) to call the player's bet (note that it would not be true in a no limit game). Once opponent A calls, opponent B must decide whether to call or fold. To figure out which action opponent B should choose, calculate his expectation in each case. This depends on the number of cards among the remaining 42 that will give him the best hand, and the size of the pot when he is deciding. (Here, as in arguments involving the fundamental theorem, we assume that each player has complete information of their opponents' cards.)

$$E(\text{opponent } B \mid \text{folding}) = 0$$

$$E(\text{opponent } B \mid \text{calling}) = (4/42) \cdot (P + 2) - (38/42) \cdot (1)$$

Opponent B doesn't win or lose anything by folding. When calling, he wins the pot $4/42$ of the time, and loses one big bet the remainder of the time. Setting these two expectations equal to each other and solving for P lets us determine the pot-size at which he is indifferent to calling or folding:

$\Rightarrow P = 7.5$ big bets

$$E(\text{opponent } B \mid \text{folding}) = E(\text{player } B \mid \text{calling})$$

When the pot is larger than this, opponent B should continue; otherwise, it's in B 's best interest to fold.

To figure out which action on opponent B 's part *the player* would prefer, calculate the

$E(\text{the player} \mid B \text{ folds}) = (33/42) \cdot (P + 2)$
player's expectation the same way

$$E(\text{the player} \mid B \text{ calls}) = (29/42) \cdot (P + 3)$$

The player's expectation depends in each case on the size of the pot (in other words, the pot odds B is getting when considering his call.) Setting these two equal lets us calculate the pot-size P where the player is indifferent whether B calls or folds:

$$E(\text{the player} \mid B \text{ calls}) = E(\text{the player} \mid B \text{ folds})$$

$\Rightarrow P = 5.25$ big bets

When the pot is smaller than this, the player profits when opponent B is chasing, but when the pot is larger than this, the player's expectation is higher when B folds instead of chasing.

In this case, there is a range of pot-sizes where it's correct for B to fold, and the player makes more money when he does so than when he incorrectly chases. This can be seen graphically below

```

|
B
SHOULD FOLD |
B
SHOULD CALL | v | WANTS
B
TO CALL | WANTS
B
TO FOLD | v +---+---+---+---+---+---+---+---+---+---> pot-size
P
in big bets 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 XXXXXXXXXXXX ^ "PARADOXICAL REGION"
    
```

The range of pot sizes marked with the X's is where the player wants his opponent to fold correctly, because the player loses expectation when he calls incorrectly.

Analysis

In essence, in the above example, when opponent B calls in the "paradoxical region", he is paying too high a price for his weak draw, but the player is no longer the sole benefactor

of that high price — opponent *A* is now taking *B*'s money those times that *A* makes his flush draw. Compared to the case where the player is heads up with opponent *B*, the player still stands the risk of losing the whole pot, but are no longer getting 100% of the compensation from *B*'s loose calls.

It is the existence of this middle region of pot sizes, where a player wants at least some of his opponents to fold correctly, that explains the standard poker strategy of thinning the field as much as possible when a player thinks he holds the best hand. Even opponents with incorrect draws cost a player money when they call his bets, because part of their calls end up in the stacks of other opponents drawing against you.

Because the player is losing expectation from *B*'s call, it follows that the *aggregate* of all other opponents (i.e., *A* and *B*) must be gaining from *B*'s call. In other words, if *A* and *B* were to meet in the parking lot after the game and split their profits, they would have been colluding against the player. This is sometimes referred to as *implicit collusion*. It should be contrasted with what is sometimes called *schooling*. Schooling occurs when many opponents *correctly* call against a player with the best hand, whereas implicit collusion occurs when an opponent *incorrectly* calls against a player with the best hand.

One conclusion of Morton's theorem is that, for example, in a loose hold'em game, the value of suited hands goes up, because they are precisely the types of hands which will benefit from implicit collusion.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Pot odds

[Poker](#) players use **pot odds** to determine the expected value (profitability over the long run) of a play. In general, **odds** may be expressed as a win-to-loss ratio. Odds may be converted into percentage **probabilities** using the formula: win-to-loss odds = win / (win + loss) % probability. For example 1-to-4 odds translate to $1 / (1 + 4) = 20\%$ probability. Odds are also commonly expressed in terms of **odds against** (loss-to-win ratio). As a convention, this article uses **odds for** (win-to-loss).

For every potential action (check, fold, call, raise) at every point in a game of poker, the correct strategy is influenced by the pot odds facing the player (and offered to the opponent(s)). The lower the pot odds facing a call, the more likely it is that folding will be the correct play, and the higher the pot odds facing a call, the more likely it is that calling is the correct play. For example, if a player can call for \$1 with a \$1000 pot, there is essentially *no hand* that would be correct to fold, because the player only has to win one time in a thousand for the call to be profitable.

The **probability of winning** is the chance that the player's hand will win either by being the best hand at the [showdown](#) or because the opponents fold.

Texas hold 'em example

In [Texas hold 'em](#), the approximate *percentage* probability that a player will hit an [out](#) on the next card is calculated as: (number of outs) x 2 + 1. For example, if a player has a potential flush and therefore 9 cards could improve his hand, there is roughly a 19% (9

$\times 2 + 1$) probability the next card will give him his flush. With two cards to come, the approximate percentage probability is: (number of outs) $\times 4 - 1$. See discussion of [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#) for more details.

For an action to have a positive expectation, a player's odds of winning must be at least equal to the applicable pot odds.

Simple pot odds

Simple pot odds, or **expressed pot odds**, apply when considering a call when no further betting will be made (e.g., calling a bet on the final round). Simple pot odds are the ratio of the size of the potential bet to the size of the pot (bet-to-pot ratio). For example, if a player must call a \$10 bet for a chance to win a \$40 pot (not including the player's \$10 call), the player's simple pot odds are 1-to-4 (20% probability). Continuing the example, assume the player's odds of winning are also 1-to-4. If the pot is played five times, the player puts in \$10 five times, loses four times and wins \$50 once (breaking even).

Simple pot odds apply on any betting round when making a pure bluff if the bluff will be given up if called or raised.

Implied pot odds

Implied pot odds, or **implied odds**, apply in situations where future betting may occur (e.g., with more cards or more draws to come) and the player's hand is currently a certain loser but may improve to a certain winner (e.g., improving from no pair to a nut flush). Precise calculation of implied odds for hands that may be *probable* winners is significantly more complex and not well-documented in poker literature. Note on terminology: some authors use the term *implied pot odds* to specifically refer to situations with one card (or draw) to come and the term **effective implied pot odds** to refer to situations with more than one card (or draw) to come.

A player's **implied pot** is the current pot plus the value of future bets expected from opponents that may be won, *excluding* the player's own bets. When figuring the implied pot, a player must estimate the bets expected from opponents *in the event the player wins the pot*.

Texas hold 'em example

Alice holds the AS and the board shows three low spades with one card to come. Alice believes she will only win if another spade comes on the river to make her a nut flush. To figure her implied pot, Alice must estimate the expected bets by her opponents *if the spade comes* on the last card. In that event, because of the fair chance the opponent may not have a high spade, Alice may reasonably have a low expectation of further contributions to the pot by her opponents.

A player's **effective bet** is the sum of the current potential bet plus all future bets a player expects to make to see the last card, *excluding* any bets on the end. When there is only one card to come, the effective bet is simply the current potential bet under consideration. A player's implied pot odds are the ratio of the effective bet to the implied pot.

Texas hold'em example, two cards to come

With two cards to come, Alice holds a nut flush draw after the flop and faces a \$5 call to win a \$20 pot. If Alice makes her flush, she expects her opponent to contribute another \$10 on the turn and \$10 on the river. Alice's *effective call* is \$15 (\$5 on the flop + \$10 on the turn). Alice's *implied pot* is \$40 (\$20 current pot + \$10 turn + \$10 river). Alice's *implied pot odds* are \$15-to-\$40 or 27% ($15 / (15 + 40)$). A call by Alice has a positive expectation because the probability of making her flush (35% with two cards to come) is greater than the implied pot odds (27%).

Texas hold'em example, one card to come

With one card to come, Alice still holds a nut flush draw and faces a \$10 call to win a \$35 pot. If Alice makes her flush, she expects her opponent to contribute another \$10 in the final round. Alice's *implied pot* is \$45 (\$35 current pot + 10 future bets by her opponent). Alice's *implied pot odds* are \$10-to-\$45 or 18% ($10 / (10 + 45)$). A call by Alice has an about break-even expectation because the probability of making her flush (19% with one card to come) is about the same as her implied pot odds (18%).

Reverse implied pot odds

Reverse implied pot odds, or **reverse implied odds**, apply to situations where a player will win the minimum if he has the best hand but lose the maximum if he does not have the best hand. Aggressive actions (bets and raises) are subject to reverse pot odds, because they win the minimum if they win immediately (the current pot), but may lose the maximum if called (the current pot plus the called bet or raise). These situations may also occur when a player has a [made hand](#) with little chance of improving which he believes may currently be the best hand, but an opponent continues to bet. If the opponent is weak or bluffing, he will likely give up after the player calls and not call any bets the player makes. If the opponent has a superior hand, he will continue the hand (extracting additional bets or calls from the player).

Limit Texas hold'em example

With one card to come, Alice holds a made hand with little chance of improving and faces a \$10 call to win a \$30 pot. If her opponent is weak or bluffing, Alice expects no further bets or calls from her opponent. If her opponent has a superior hand, Alice expects the opponent to bet another \$10 on the end. Therefore, if Alice wins, she only expects to win the \$30 currently in the pot, but if she loses, she expects to lose \$20 (\$10 call on the turn + \$10 call on the river). Because she is risking \$20 to win \$30, Alice's reverse implied pot odds are \$20-to-\$30 or 40% ($20 / (20 + 30)$). For calling to have a positive expectation, Alice must believe her probability of winning the pot is at least 40%.

Manipulating pot odds

Often a player will bet to manipulate the pot odds offered to other players. A common example of manipulating pot odds is make a bet to [protect](#) a [made hand](#) that discourages opponents from [chasing](#) a [drawing hand](#).

No-limit Texas hold 'em example

With one card to come, Bob has a made hand, but the board shows a potential flush draw. Bob wants to bet enough to [make it wrong](#) for an opponent with a flush draw to call, but Bob doesn't want to bet more than he has to in the event the opponent already has him beat. How much should Bob bet?

Assume a \$20 pot and one opponent. If Bob bets half the pot (\$10), the opponent faces a \$10 call to win a \$30 pot. The opponent's pot odds will be \$10 call-to-\$30 pot or 25% ($10 / (10 + 30)$). If the opponent is on a flush draw (19% with one card to come), the pot is not offering adequate pot odds for the opponent to call unless the opponent thinks he can induce additional final round betting from Bob if the opponent make his hand (see implied pot odds).

Bluffing frequency

Game theory shows that a player should bluff a percentage of the time equal to his opponent's pot odds to call the bluff. For example, in the final betting round, if the pot is \$30 and a player is contemplating a \$30 bet (which will give his opponent 2-to-1 pot odds for the call), the player should bluff half as often as he would bet for [value](#) (one out of three times).

See the article on [bluffing](#) for more details.

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[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Dead money](#)

Dead money

In [poker](#), **dead money** is the amount of money in the pot other than the equal amounts bet by active remaining players in that pot. Examples of dead money include money contributed to the pot by players who have folded, a dead blind posted by a player returning to a game after missing blinds, or an odd chip left in the pot from a previous deal. For example, 8 players each [ante](#) \$1, one player opens for \$2, and gets two callers, making

the pot total \$14. Three players are now in the pot having contributed \$3 each, for \$9 "live" money; the remaining \$5 (representing the antes of the players who folded) is dead money.

The amount of dead money in a pot affects the [pot odds](#) of plays or rules of thumb that are based on the number of players. For example, a common rule of thumb used by many [Omaha](#) players is that one should raise with a [nut](#) low hand on the last round only if there are four players in the pot, and just call if there are only three. But if there is considerable dead money in the pot, this changes the odds to favor raising even with only three players.

The term "dead money" is also used in a derogatory sense to refer to money put in the pot by players who are still legally eligible to win it, but who are unlikely to do so because they are unskilled. This can also be applied to the player himself: *Let's invite John every week; he's dead money*. The term "dead money" also applies in tournaments, when a player enters who has virtually no chance of winning.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker play

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Aggression](#) | [Bluff](#) | [Check-raise](#) | [Defense](#) | [Draw](#) | [Isolation](#) | [Position](#) | [Protection](#) | [Slow play](#) | [Steal](#)

Aggression

In the game of [poker](#), opens and raises are considered **aggressive** plays, while calls and checks are considered **passive** (though a [check-raise](#) would be considered a very aggressive play). It is said that "aggression has its own value", meaning that often aggressive plays can make money with weak hands because of [bluff](#) value. Aggressive plays also tend to give the opponents more opportunities to make mistakes.

While it is true that aggressive play is generally superior to passive play, using any play exclusively can lead to predictability, and being too predictable is far worse than being too passive. A player who is constantly aggressive and plays many inferior hands is called a "maniac", and skilled players will take advantage of him by calling him more often, using [isolation](#) plays, and by other means.

If a player is not aggressive with his weaker hands, the opponents can safely fold whenever the player does bet or raise. The appropriate amount of aggression can be computed using game theory, and depends on the game being played and the tendencies of the opponents.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Bluff

In the card game of [poker](#), to **bluff** is to bet or raise with an inferior hand, or with a hand believed to be inferior. The term is also used as a noun: a **bluff** is the act of bluffing.

Pure Bluff

A *pure bluff*, or *stone-cold bluff*, is a bet or raise with an inferior hand that has little or no chance of improving. A player making a pure bluff believes he can only win the pot if all opponents fold. The [pot odds](#) for a bluff are the ratio of the size of the bluff to the pot. A pure bluff has a positive expectation (will be profitable in the long run) when the probability of being called by an opponent is lower than the pot odds for the bluff.

For example, if after all the cards are out, a player holding a [busted drawing](#) hand may decide the only way to win the pot is to make a pure bluff. If the player bets the size of the pot on a pure bluff, the bluff will have a positive expectation if the probability of being called is less than 50%. Note, however, that the opponent may also consider the pot odds when deciding whether call. In this example, the opponent will be facing 1-to-2 pot odds for the call. The opponent will have a positive expectation for calling the bluff if the opponent believes the probability the player is bluffing is at least 33%.

Semi-bluff

In games with multiple betting rounds, to bluff on one round with an inferior or drawing hand that might improve in a later round is called a *semi-bluff*. A player making a semi-bluff can win the pot two different ways: all opponents fold immediately or by catching a card to improve the player's hand.

For example, a player in a [stud poker](#) game with four spade-suited cards showing (but none among their downcards) on the penultimate round might raise, hoping that his opponents believe he already has a flush. If his bluff fails and he is called, he still might be dealt a spade on the final card and win the [showdown](#) (or he might be dealt another non-spade and try his bluff again, in which case it is a *pure bluff* on the final round rather than a semi-bluff).

Bluffing circumstances

Bluffing may be more effective in some circumstances than others. Bluffs have a higher expectation when the probability of being called decreases. Several game circumstances may decrease the probability of being called (and increase the profitability of the bluff):

- Fewer opponents who must fold to the bluff.
- The bluff provides less favorable pot odds to opponents for a call.
- A [scare card](#) comes that increases the number of superior hands that the player may be perceived to have.
- The player's betting pattern in the hand has been consistent with the superior hand they are representing with the bluff.

- The opponent's betting pattern suggests the opponent may have a marginal hand that is vulnerable to a greater number of potential superior hands.
- The opponent's betting pattern suggests the opponent may have a [drawing](#) hand and the bluff provides unfavorable pot odds to the opponent for [chasing](#) the draw.
- Opponents are not irrationally committed to the pot.

Optimal bluffing frequency

If a player bluffs too infrequently, observant opponents will recognize that the player is betting for [value](#) and will only call with very strong hands or with [drawing](#) hands when they are receiving favorable [pot odds](#). If a player bluffs too frequently, observant opponents *snap-off* his bluffs by calling or reraising. Occasional bluffing disguises not just the hands a player is bluffing with, but also his legitimate hands that opponents may think he may be bluffing with. David Sklansky, in his book *The Theory of Poker*, states "Mathematically, the optimal bluffing strategy is to bluff in such a way that the chances against your bluffing are identical to the pot odds your opponent is getting."

Optimal bluffing also requires that the bluffs must be performed in such a manner that opponents cannot tell when a player is bluffing or not. To prevent bluffs from occurring in a predictable pattern, game theory suggests the use of a randomizing agent to determine whether to bluff. For example, a player might use the colors of his hidden cards, the second hand on his watch, or some other unpredictable mechanism to determine whether to bluff.

Bluff (the game)

Bluff is an ancient predecessor of poker played in the 1800s, where only the cards from 10 to ace were used, and straights and flushes hadn't been invented yet.

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[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Check-raise

A **check-raise** in [poker](#) is a common deceptive play in which a player checks early in a betting round, hoping someone else will open. The player who checked then raises in the same round.

This might be done, for example, when the first player believes that an opponent has an inferior hand and will not call a direct bet, but that he may attempt to [bluff](#), allowing the first player to win more money than he would by betting straightforwardly. The key point is that if no one else is keen to bet, then the most a player can raise (in a limit game) by is one single bet. If someone else bets first, he can raise, therefore increasing the value of the pot by two bets. In a no-limit game, there is no restriction to the size of one's bet and a check-raise is likely to be much larger than the second player's bet.

Of course, if no other player chooses to open, the betting will be *checked around* and the play will fail.

While it is an important part of poker strategy, this play is not allowed in some home games and certain small-stakes casino games. It is also frequently not allowed in the game of [California lowball](#).

Check-raises can also be used as an intimidation technique over the course of a game. A player who has frequently been check-raised will be less likely to attempt to steal the pot.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Defense

In [poker](#), certain [aggression](#) plays like [steals](#) can be very effective; players must occasionally reply to them with defensive plays with hands they might not otherwise play. If, for example, an opponent to a player's right frequently steals when the player has posted a [blind](#), the player can be reasonably sure that the opponent is often doing so with inferior hands (otherwise he wouldn't be doing it so often), the player can likely defend his blind (call or raise back) with more hands than he might otherwise.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Draw

A [poker](#) player is **drawing** if he has a [hand](#) that is incomplete and needs further cards to become valuable. The hand itself is called a **draw**. For example, in [seven-card stud](#), if a player's four of the first five cards are all spades, but the hand is otherwise weak, he is *drawing* for a [flush](#). If an opponent has a made hand that will beat the player's potential flush, then he is *drawing dead*, that is, even if he make his flush, he will lose. In contrast, a [made hand](#) already has value and does not need additional cards to improve.

Outs

An unseen card that would improve a drawing hand to a likely winner is an [out](#). *Playing a drawing hand has a positive expectation if the probability of catching an out is greater than the [pot odds](#) offered by the pot.*

The probability of [catching](#) an out with one card to come is:

$Probability = \text{NumberOfOuts} / \text{NumberOfUnseenCards}$

The probability of catching at least one out with two cards to come is:

$Probability = 1 - (\text{NumberOfNonOuts} / \text{NumberOfUnseenCards}) * ((\text{NumberOfNonOuts} - 1) / (\text{NumberOfUnseenCards} - 1))$

A **dead out** is a card that would normally be considered an out for a particular drawing hand, but should be excluded when calculating the probability of catching an out. Outs can be dead for two reasons:

- A dead out may work to improve an opponent's hand to a superior hand. For example, if Ted has a spade flush draw and Alice has an outside straight draw, any spades that complete Alice's straight are dead outs because they would also give Ted a flush.
- A dead out may have already been seen. In some game variations such as [stud poker](#), some of the cards held by each player are seen by all players.

Types of draws

Flush draw

A **flush draw**, or **four flush**, is a hand with four cards of the same suit that may improve to a flush. For example, *KC-9C-8C-5C-x*. A flush draw has nine outs (thirteen cards of the suit less the four already in the hand).

Outside straight draw

An **outside straight draw**, or **open-ended straight draw**, is a hand with four of the five needed cards in sequence (and could be completed on either end) that may improve to a straight. For example, *x-9-8-7-6-x*. An outside straight draw has eight outs (four cards to complete the top of the straight and four cards to complete the bottom of the straight). Straight draws including an ace are not outside straight draws, because the straight can only be completed on one end (has four outs).

Inside straight draw

An **inside straight draw**, or **gutshot draw** or **belly buster draw**, is a hand with four of the five cards need for a straight, but missing one in the middle. For example, *9-x-7-6-5*. An inside straight draw has four outs (four cards to fill the missing internal rank). Because straight draws including an ace only have four outs, they are also considered inside straight

draws. For example, *A-K-Q-J-x* or *A-2-3-4-x*. The probability of catching an out for an inside straight draw is roughly half that of catching an out for an outside straight draw.

Double inside straight draw

A **double inside straight draw**, or **double gutshot draw** or **double belly buster draw**, is a hand with three of the five cards need for a straight in sequence, plus two additional cards one gap from each end. For example, *9-x-7-6-5-x-3*. An double inside straight draw has eight outs (four cards to fill either missing internal rank). Double inside straights only occur in games with seven or more cards. The probability of catching an out for double inside straight draw is the same as for an outside straight draw.

Other draws

Sometimes a [made hand](#) needs to draw to a better hand. For example, if a player has two pair or three of a kind, but an opponent has a straight or flush, to win the player must draw an out to improve to a full house. There are a multitude of potential situations where one hand needs to improve to beat another, but the expected value of most drawing plays can be calculated by counting outs, computing the probability of winning, and comparing the probability of winning to the [pot odds](#).

Backdoor draw

A **backdoor draw**, or **runner-runner draw**, is a drawing hand that needs to catch two outs to win. For example, a hand with three cards of the same suit has a *backdoor flush draw* because it needs two more cards of the suit. The probability of catching two outs with two cards to come is:

$$\text{Probability} = \text{NumberOfOuts} / \text{NumberOfUnseenCards} * [(\text{NumberOfOuts} - 1) / (\text{NumberOfUnseenCards} - 1)]$$

For example, if after the [flop](#) in [Texas hold 'em](#), a player a backdoor flush draw (e.g., three spades), the probability of catching two outs on the [turn](#) and [river](#) is $(9 / 47) * (8 / 46) = 3\%$.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Isolation

In [poker](#), an **isolation** play is usually a raise designed to encourage one or more players to fold, specifically for the purpose of making the hand a one-on-one contest with a specific opponent. For example, if an opponent raises and a player suspects he is [bluffing](#), a player may reraise to pressure other opponents to fold, with the aim of getting [heads up](#).

Isolation plays are most common against overly-[aggressive](#) players ("maniacs") who frequently play inferior hands, or with players who may have a [drawing](#) hand. Isolation

plays are also common in [tournaments](#) to isolate a player who is "short stacked", that is, one who is in imminent danger of elimination, and so is likely to be playing aggressively out of desperation.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Position

Position in [poker](#) refers the order in which players are seated around the table and the related poker strategy implications. Players who act first are in "early position"; players who act later are in "late position". A player "has position" on opponents acting before him and is "out of position" to opponents acting after him. Because players act in clockwise order, a player "has position" on opponents seated to his right, except when the opponent has the [button](#) and certain cases in the first betting round of games with blinds.

The primary advantage held by a player in late position is that he will have more information with which to make his decisions than players in early position, who will have to act first. Also, as earlier opponents fold, the [probability](#) of a hand being the best goes up as the number of opponents goes down.

Texas hold 'em example

There are 10 players playing \$4/\$8 fixed limit. Alice pays the \$2 small blind. Bob pays the \$4 big blind. Carol is under the gun (first to act). If Carol has a hand like KH JS, she should probably fold. With 9 opponents remaining to act, the chances are good that at least one of them will have a dominating hand like A-A, K-K, A-K, A-J, K-Q or J-J, and even if no one does, seven of them (all but the two players in the blind) will have position on Carol in the next three betting rounds.

Now instead, suppose David in the cut-off position (to the right of the button) has the same KH JS and all players fold to him. In this situation, there are only three opponents left to act, so the odds that one of them has a dominating hand are considerably less. Secondly, two of those three (Alice and Bob) will be out of position to David on later betting rounds. A common play would be for David to raise and hope that the button (the only player who has position on David) folds. David's raise might simply steal the blinds if they don't have playable hands, but if they do play, David will be in good shape to take advantage of his position in later betting rounds.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Protection

In [poker](#), one of the motives for betting or raising is to give your hand **protection**, which means to encourage opponents to fold a [drawing](#) hand that might otherwise improve to the best hand. A player generally protects [made hands](#) perceived vulnerable to an opponent's drawing hand. A protection play differs from a [bluff](#) in that the bluff can win *only* when the

opponent folds, while protection bet is made with a hand that is likely to win a showdown, but isn't strong enough for [slow playing](#).

The importance of protection increases when there are multiple opponents. For example, if a hand is presently the best, but each of four opponents has a 1-in-6 chance of drawing an [out](#), the four opponents *combined* become the favorite to win, even though each one is individually an underdog. With a protection bet, some or all of them may fold, leaving fewer opponents and a better chance of winning.

The term *protection* is also often heard in the context of an *all-in* player (see [poker table stakes rules](#)). A bet by an opponent serves to protect the all-in player by reducing the number of opponents the all-in player must beat. To deliberately make such a bet solely to protect another player's hand constitutes [collusion](#).

A player may also be said to "protect" his or her cards by placing an object like a specialty chip or miniature figure upon them. This prevents the player from having his cards accidentally collected by the [dealer](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Slow play

Slow playing (also called **sandbagging** or **trapping**) is deceptive play in [poker](#) that is roughly the opposite of [bluffing](#): betting weakly or [passively](#) with a strong holding rather than betting [aggressively](#) with a weak one. The [flat call](#) is one such play. The objective of the passive slow play is to lure opponents into a pot who might fold to a raise, or to cause them to bet more strongly than they would if the player had played [aggressively](#) (bet or raised). Slow playing sacrifices [protection](#) against hands that may improve and risks losing the pot-building value of a bet if the opponent also checks.

Sklansky defines the following conditions for profitable slow plays:^[1]

- A player must have a very strong hand.
- The [free card](#) or cheap card the player is allowing to his opponents must have good possibilities of making them a second-best hand.
- That same free card must have little chance of an opponent a better hand or even giving them a [draw](#) to a better hand on the next round with sufficient [pot odds](#) to justify a call.
- The player must believe that he will drive out opponents by showing [aggression](#), but can win a big pot if the opponents stay in the pot.
- The pot must not yet be very large.

Seven-card stud example

In a [Seven-card stud](#) game, Ted's first three cards are all fours. Alice with a king showing bets first, Ted raises and Alice calls. On the next round, the Alice catches another king, and Ted miraculously catch the last four (making four-of-a-kind). Ted suspects Alice has two pair or three kings, and Alice suspects that Ted has two pair or three fours. Alice bets again, and Ted just flat calls. Ted decides to just call for next round or two, and maybe even check if Alice doesn't bet, rather than raising, for several reasons. Ted's

hand is so strong that the chance of getting beaten is negligible, so he doesn't need protection. If Alice just has two pair and Ted acts strongly, Alice may think Ted has three fours and fold if she doesn't improve. By allowing Alice to continue for smaller stakes, Ted hopes that Alice will improve to a very strong (but second best) hand that will induce her to bet, raise, or at least call in the later betting rounds.

Relationship between slow playing and bluffing

Against observant opponents, the frequency of bluffing affects the effectiveness of slow playing, and vice versa. If a player's table image is that of an aggressive bluffer, slow playing is less important because his opponents will be more willing to call his usual bets and raises. Similarly, if a player is perceived as a "trappy" player (uses frequent slow plays), his bluffs are less likely to be respected because his opponents expect him to slow play his strong hands.^[2]

Check raising as a slow play

A [check-raise](#) is not necessarily a slow play. Often, the purpose of a check-raise is to drive out opponents from a pot, which is the opposite of the goal of a slow play.^[3] However, within the context of a single betting round, check-raising can be employed as a slow play.

Draw poker example

Alice, Bob, Carol, and David are playing [draw poker](#). After [anteing](#), Alice starts with a pair of aces, and opens the betting for \$2. Bob raises an additional \$2, bringing the bet to \$4. Carol folds. David calls the \$4, and Alice puts in an additional \$2 to match the raise. Drawing three cards, she receives another ace, and a pair of fives. Since her aces-full is almost certain to be unbeatable, it does not need the protection of a bet. Also, Bob earlier raised, and David called a raise, so they likely have strong hands and one of them will bet if Alice doesn't. Finally, since Bob and David earlier showed strength, and they know that Alice knows this, Alice betting into them would be seen as a bold move likely to scare one or both of them off, especially if they weren't as strong as they seem. Alice decides conditions are right for a slow play: Alice checks. As she hoped, Bob bets \$2. David thinks for a minute, then calls the \$2. Alice now springs the trap and raises \$2. Bob calls the additional \$2, and David (who now realizes that he is probably beaten) folds. Bob reveals three sixes, and surrenders the pot to Alice. If Alice had just bet her hand on the second round, it is likely that Bob would just have called and David may or may not have called, earning Alice \$2 to \$4 on the second round. But with the slow play, she earned \$6.

Even in games (such as California [lowball](#)) where the check-raise is not allowed, one can make other sandbagging plays such as just [flat calling](#) instead of raising with a very strong hand and then later raising.

Fishing for the overcall

Fishing for the overcall occurs when the last card a player is dealt makes him a very strong hand, an opponent in front of him bets, and there are more opponents yet to act

behind him. While the player might normally raise with his hand, just calling may encourage the opponents behind him to [overcall](#) when they would have folded to a raise. For this play to be used profitably, one or more conditions like the following must be met:

- The original bettor is all-in and therefore has no money to call a raise.
- The player is confident that the original bettor was bluffing and would not call a raise.
- There are several opponents yet to act. If there is only one opponent yet to act, then getting the overcall would gain no more money than raising and having the initial bettor call.
- The opponents are likely to overcall the initial bet, but not a raise. This play sacrifices the profit that might have been made from opponents who would have overcalled a raise.

A common example of fishing for overcalls occurs in [High-low split](#) games like [Omaha hold 'em](#). If John is confident that Mary is betting a high hand, then John might flat call with his low hand to fish for overcalls rather than make it more difficult for opponents to call. If John were to raise, he and Mary would gain no profit at all if no other opponents called.

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1. ^{a b} David Sklansky (1987). *The Theory of Poker*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685000.
2. [^] Dan Harrington and Bill Robertie (2005). *Harrington on Hold'em: Expert Strategy For No-Limit Tournaments; Volume II: Strategic Play*. Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685353.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Steal

In [poker](#), the term **steal** is often used as merely a synonym for [bluff](#), but there is a more specific use of the term which is also called an "ante steal" or "blind steal" (depending on whether the game being played uses [antes](#) or [blinds](#)).

To steal is to [raise](#) with a hand less valuable than what might normally be considered a raising hand, with the hope that the few players remaining will not have a hand worth calling the raise, thereby winning the antes or blinds without further action.

This play is used either in late [position](#) after several people have folded, or when the game is short-handed. Steals happen most often in tournaments due to the escalating ante/blind structure.

While steals like this don't win much money per hand, they can accumulate to considerable profit if the players to your left are passive enough to not contest many of your steals. Of course, skilled players will recognize repeated steal plays and frequently reraise for [defense](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker probability

In [poker](#), the **probability** of each type of [5 card hand](#) can be computed by calculating the proportion of hands of that type among all possible hands.

Frequency of 5 card poker hands

The following enumerates the frequency of each hand, given all combinations of 5 cards randomly drawn from a full deck of 52, without wild cards. The probability is calculated based on 2,598,960, the total number of 5 card combinations. Here, the probability is the frequency of the hand divided by the total number of 5 card hands, and the odds are defined by $(1/p)$ 1 : 1, where p is the probability. (The frequencies given are exact; the probabilities and odds are approximate.)

Hand	Frequency	Probability	Odds against
Royal flush	4	0.00000154 %	649,740 : 1
Straight flush	36	0.0000154 %	64,973 : 1
Four of a kind	624	0.0240 %	4,164 : 1
Full house	3,744	0.144 %	693 : 1
Flush	5,108	0.197 %	508 : 1
Straight	10,200	0.392 %	254 : 1
Three of a kind	54,912	2.11 %	46.3 : 1
Two pair	123,552	4.75 %	20.0 : 1
One pair	1,098,240	42.3 %	1.37 : 1
No pair	1,302,540	50.1 %	0.995 : 1
Total	2,598,960	100 %	1 : 1

The [royal flush](#) is also included as a straight flush above. The royal flush can be formed 4 ways (one for each suit), giving it a probability of 0.000001539077169 and odds of 649,740 : 1.

When ace-low straights and straight flushes are not counted, the probabilities of each are reduced: straights and straight flushes become 9/10 as common as they otherwise would be.

Derivation

The following computations show how the above frequencies were determined. To understand these derivations, the reader should be familiar with the basic properties of the

binomial coefficients and their interpretation as the number of ways of choosing elements from a given set. See also: sample space and event (probability theory).

- *Straight flush* — Each straight flush is uniquely determined by its highest ranking card; and these ranks go from 5 (A-2-3-4-5) up to A (T-J-Q-K-A) in each of the 4 suits. Thus, the total number of straight flushes is: $\binom{10}{1} \binom{4}{1} = 40$
- *Four of a kind* — Any one of the thirteen ranks can form the four of a kind, leaving $52 - 4 = 48$ possibilities for the final card. Thus, the total number of four-of-a-kinds is: $\binom{13}{1} \binom{48}{1} = 624$
- *Full house* — The full house comprises a triple (three of a kind) and a pair. The triple can be any one of the thirteen ranks, and three of the four cards of this rank are chosen. The pair can be any one of the remaining twelve ranks, and two of the four cards of the rank are chosen. Thus, the total number of full houses is: $\binom{13}{1} \binom{4}{3} \binom{12}{1} \binom{4}{2} = 3,744$
- *Flush* — The flush contains any five of the thirteen ranks, all of which belong to one of the four suits, minus the 40 straight flushes. Thus, the total number of flushes is: $\binom{13}{5} \binom{4}{1} - 40 = 5,108$
- *Straight* — The straight consists of any one of the ten possible sequences of five consecutive cards, from 5-4-3-2-A to A-K-Q-J-T. Each of these five cards can have any one of the four suits. Finally, as with the flush, the 40 straight flushes must be excluded, giving: $\binom{10}{1} \binom{4}{1}^5 - 40 = 10,200$
- *Three of a kind* — Any of the thirteen ranks can form the three of a kind, which can contain any three of the four suits. The other cards can have any two of the remaining twelve ranks, and each can have any one of the four suits. Thus, the total number of three-of-a-kinds is: $\binom{13}{1} \binom{4}{3} \binom{12}{2} \binom{4}{1}^2 = 54,912$
- *Two pair* — The pairs can have any two of the thirteen ranks, and each pair can have two of the four suits. The final card can have any one of the eleven remaining ranks, and any suit. Thus, the total number of two-pairs is: $\binom{13}{2} \binom{4}{2}^2 \binom{11}{1} \binom{4}{1} = 123,552$
- *Pair* — The pair can have any one of the thirteen ranks, and any two of the four suits. The remaining three cards can have any three of the remaining twelve ranks, and each can have any of the four suits. Thus, the total number of pair hands is: $\binom{13}{1} \binom{4}{2} \binom{12}{3} \binom{4}{1}^3 = 1,098,240$
- *No pair* — A no-pair hand contains five of the thirteen ranks, discounting the ten possible straights, and each card can have any of the four suits, discounting the four possible flushes. Alternatively, a no-pair hand is any hand that does not fall into one of the above categories; that is, any way to choose five out of 52 cards, discounting all of the above hands. Thus, the total number of no-pair hands is: $\left[\binom{52}{5} - 10 \right] (4^5 - 4) = \binom{52}{5} - 1,296,420 = 1,302,540$

Frequency of 7 card poker hands

In some popular variations of poker, a player uses the best five-card poker hand out of seven cards. The frequencies are calculated in a manner similar to that shown for 5-card hands, except additional complications arise due to the extra two cards in the 7 card poker hand. The total number of distinct 7-card hands is 133,784,560. It is notable that the probability of a no-pair hand is *less* than the probability of a one-pair or two-pair hand. (The frequencies given are exact; the probabilities and odds are approximate.)

Hand	Frequency	Probability	Odds against
<u>Straight flush</u>	41,584	0.03108 %	3,216 : 1
<u>Four of a kind</u>	224,848	0.1681 %	594 : 1
<u>Full house</u>	3,473,184	2.60 %	37.5 : 1
<u>Flush</u>	4,047,644	3.03 %	32.1 : 1
<u>Straight</u>	6,180,020	4.62 %	20.6 : 1
<u>Three of a kind</u>	6,461,620	4.83 %	19.7 : 1
<u>Two pair</u>	31,433,400	23.5 %	3.26 : 1
<u>One pair</u>	58,627,800	43.8 %	1.28 : 1
<u>No pair</u>	23,294,460	17.4 %	4.74 : 1
Total	133,784,560	100 %	0 : 1

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#)

Poker psychology

[Poker](#) is a multi-faceted game that values many skills, including the psychology involved in playing against your competitors. For example, many games often end with a very weak hand, such as a pair of sevens, beating a weaker [hand](#), such as a pair of threes. Your hand doesn't have to be the best hand possible. It simply has to be better than those still active in the hand.

Discerning the likely holdings your opponents have is a skill. Reading poker [tells](#) -- twitches, trembles, and other signs -- might give you a clue as to what your opponent has. Mastering the psychology of poker is a crucial part of reading tells, as well a larger decisionmaking.

Poker psychology boils down to your ability to observe how others play, and use that experience to judge how your opponents may be playing in the current hand. The simplest

layer of poker psychology is to watch what your opponents visibly do based on their own cards. For example, tracking the [betting](#) patterns of each player.

By observing patterns, players can make informed judgements in response.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Tell](#) | [Tilt](#)

Tell

In [poker](#), a **tell** is a detectable change in a player's behavior or demeanor that gives clues to that player's assessment of their hand. Behaviors that may exhibit tells include leaning forward or back, placing chips with more or less force, fidgeting, changes in breathing or tone of voice, facial expressions, direction of gaze or actions with the cards, chips, cigarettes, or drinks. A player gains an advantage if he observes another player's tell, particularly if the tell is unconscious and reliable. Some players may fake tells, hoping to induce their opponents into making mistakes based on the false tell.

A player's tells only give information about that player's own assessment of their cards, and thus is only reliable in the context of a player who has accurately assessed their own hand. An unskillful player may reliably give information in a tell, but that information may be an unreliable guide to the player's hand if the player cannot assess the strength of a hand in a particular game.

Tells may be common to a class of players or unique to a single player. Examples of well known tells include:

- A player who believes his hand to be weak, hoping to [bluff](#), may throw his chips into the pot forcefully and with a direct gaze at a player he hopes to discourage from calling.
- Shaking hands, flush face or racing pulse may be the result of adrenaline caused by a player's excitement about a strong hand.
- Disinterest, leaning back, casual conversation or otherwise acting meek or mild may mean the player is attempting to disguise a strong hand.
- Forceful, aggressive, or loud demeanors or otherwise acting with confidence may mean the player is attempting to disguise a weak hand.

David Mamet's 1987 movie *House of Games* includes an interesting discussion and visual reference to tells as an essential part of the plot. The movie *Rounders* contains an even more subtle use of strategy: at one point, "Mike" discovers a tell in his opponent (that he eats cookies in a particular way after he has bet a very strong hand), and after using it once, he reveals to the opponent that he has this tell; although this eliminates the usefulness of the tell itself, it upsets his opponent so much that it affects his later play.

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[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Tilt

Tilt is a [poker](#) term for a state of mental confusion or frustration in which a player knowingly adopts a sub-optimal, over-aggressive strategy.

Placing an opponent on tilt or dealing with being on tilt oneself is one of the most important aspects of poker. It is a relatively frequent occurrence, due to frustration, animosity against other players, or simple bad luck. Experienced players recommend learning to recognize that one is experiencing tilt and to avoid allowing it to influence one's play. However, putting one's opponents on tilt is a remarkably effective way to win at the poker table, albeit one that isn't going to win many friends.

Being "on tilt"

The most common way to wind up on tilt is to be the victim of a [bad beat](#), or being defeated in a particularly public and humiliating fashion. For example:

1. Folding to a large bet only to have your opponent turn over a horrible hand (being shown a [bluff](#)).
2. Even worse: being [bluffed](#) by a small bet (a [post oak bluff](#)).
3. Having an opponent "suck out", or catch a miracle card late in the hand (an unlikely [out-draw](#)).
4. Having what you think is a dominating hand be bested by an even more powerful hand that you never saw coming.

All of these can upset the mental equilibrium considered essential for optimal poker judgement. Another common way to wind up on tilt is through basic annoyance at the behavior of the others at the poker table. Excessive rudeness (or lewdness), being heavily intoxicated at the table, and otherwise poor table etiquette are all common ways that other players can begin to wear on your nerves.

The most important thing to remember about being on tilt is to recognize when you're beginning to become on tilt. If you don't recognize the situation and take measures to alleviate it (changing tables, several deep breaths, imagining beating the snot out of the player at the table), you will quickly wind up broke and only more frustrated than you were when you started going on tilt.

For the beginning player, the elimination of tilt is considered to be the most essential improvement that can be made in play (for instance in the strategic advice of Mike Caro and especially, Lou Krieger). Many advanced players (after logging thousands of table-hours) claim to have outgrown "tilt" and frustration, although other poker professionals admit it is still a "leak" in their game.

Putting others "on tilt"

Any player with a decent amount of play-time under their belts can beat a table filled with bet-crazy "maniacs" who will go all-in with any two cards. However, winning at a poker table that has eight fifty year-old men who only bet or raise if they have two face

cards and fold under the slightest amount of pressure is much more difficult. Putting a player on tilt infuriates them to the point where they will call or raise almost any bet made.

The act of putting someone on tilt may not pay off in the short run, but if some time is put into practicing it, a player can quickly become an expert at “tilting” other players (with or without bad manners). In theory, the long-run payoff of this tactic is a positive expectation, although it has been observed (e.g. by David Sklansky) that a more profitable strategy is likely to be superior table selection.

Some of the more common methods of putting a table on tilt include:

1. Playing junk hands that have only a slight chance of winning in the hope of sucking out on the turn or the river and delivering a bad beat (this can be an enjoyable occasional style which will make the table’s play “looser”, and has been ‘perfected’ by players such as Daniel Negreanu in low and middle-limit play.)
2. Victimizing certain individuals at the table, (which is often considered a more old-fashioned tactic, identified with 1970s “verbal” experts such as Amarillo Slim.)
3. Pretending to be drunk, i.e. hustling, excellently demonstrated by Paul Newman vs. Robert Shaw in *The Sting* (although his technique included cheating).
4. Constant chattering, making weird noises and motions whenever you win a hand, or other erratic behaviour is a “tilting” or “loosening” approach first discussed by Mike Caro.
5. Taking an incredibly long time to announce and show your hand at the [showdown](#). (Such deliberate breaches of etiquette have the side effect of slowing play and risking barring, thereby limiting the earnings of the expert player. For this, and other social reasons, such tactics are mostly associated with the novice.)

All of the above have been recommended as methods of upsetting the other players at the table, with the intention of having them betting into your winning hands, and playing sub-optimally.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker gameplay and terminology

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Bad beat](#) | [Cards speak](#) | [Declaration](#) | [Flop](#) | [Freeroll](#) | [Out](#) | [Poker equipment](#) | [Rake](#) | [Ring game](#) | [Suited connectors](#)

Bad beat

In [poker](#), a **bad beat** occurs when a hand, which was at one time a big favourite to win, loses. Typically the term is only applied in this way when the player holding the eventual winning hand misplayed it spectacularly.

Alternatively, the term is also applied when a particularly strong hand loses to an even stronger one. In some casinos there is a "bad beat jackpot" awarded whenever a player suffers a particular beat.

A typical example of the first type of bad beat, in No Limit [Texas hold 'em](#):

- Alice (the *hero*) holds **AD AC** - pocket aces, the strongest possible starting hand.
- Bob (the *villain*) holds **QC 8H** - a weak hand.

The players have the same amount of chips. Before the flop, Alice raises to 15 times the big blind, placing a fifth of her stack in the pot, and only Bob calls. The flop comes **AH 8S 7S**. Although Alice has [the nuts](#) at this point, making 3 aces, she is concerned about possible draws to a straight or flush, and goes all-in with a bet that is twice the size of the pot. Bizarrely, Bob, who has only middle-pair, calls.

At this point, Bob's chances of winning are precisely 1 in 990. He can only win if both the turn card and the river card are eights. Since this is a bad beat story, the turn and river naturally bring precisely that, and Bob scoops the pot, leaving Alice cursing Bob's appalling play - he should not have called such a big bet before the flop, nor on the flop.

Reacting to bad beats

Bad beats can be infuriating, but mathematically "Alice" actually *wants* "Bob" to play in this manner. Bob took a gamble that should not have worked; his odds were 989-to-1 against. It worked this time, but if he continues to play in such a careless manner, he will almost certainly lose more than he wins. He is essentially giving away his money—and if Alice is careful, it will all go to her. Thus, the more stoic poker players accept bad beats as an unpleasant but necessary drawback to a tactic that works the vast majority of the time (989 of 990 instances, in this case). Nevertheless, a bad beat is often a profound psychological blow, and can easily lead to a player going on [tilt](#). Professional player Phil Hellmuth, among others, is notorious for his pronounced reactions to bad beats.

In [online poker](#) rooms, bad beats often lead to accusations that the random number generator is "rigged", even though such beats occur in offline games.

Bad beat jackpot

A **bad beat jackpot** is a prize that is paid when a sufficiently strong hand is shown down and loses to an even stronger hand held by another player. Not all poker games offer bad beat jackpots, and those that do have specific requirements for how strong a losing hand must be to qualify for the jackpot. For example, the losing hand may be required to be four-of-a-kind or better. There may be additional requirements as well. For example, in [Texas hold 'em](#) there is usually a requirement that both hole cards play in both the losing and winning hands. These rules vary from one cardroom to the next.

Bad beat jackpots are usually progressive, often with a small rake being taken out of each pot to fund the jackpot (in addition to the regular rake). When the jackpot is won, it is usually split among all players sitting at the table at the time of the bad beat, including players that folded their hands (usually a 25% share), with the largest shares of the jackpot going to the players holding the winning (usually 25%) and losing hand (usually 50%). Because such bad beats are rare, jackpots can grow to be quite large, sometimes reaching hundreds of thousands of dollars.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Cards speak

In the game of [poker](#), the term **cards speak** ("for themselves") is used in two contexts:

First, it is used to describe a [High-low split](#) game without a [declaration](#). That is, in a cards speak game, players all reveal their hands at the showdown, and whoever has the highest hand wins the high half of the pot and whoever has the lowest hand wins the low half.

The other context is as a [house rule](#) in casino poker rooms. "Cards speak" means that any verbal declaration as to the content of a player's hand is not binding. If Mary says she has no pair, but in fact she has a flush, her cards speak and her hand is viewed for its genuine value, that of a flush. Likewise if John says he has a flush, but in fact he does not, his hand is judged on its actual merits, not his verbal declaration. At the discretion of management, any player miscalling his hand may have that hand fouled, but this is not required.

The "cards speak" rule does not address the awarding of a pot, player responsibilities, or the [one player to a hand](#) rule. It merely means that verbal statements do not make a hand value. The cards do.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Declaration

There are several actions in [poker](#) called **declaration**, in which a player formally expresses his intent to take some action (which he is then required to perform at a later point).

Declaring target in a split pot

The most common is the act of declaring "high", "low", or "both ways" (sometimes "swing") in a high-low split game. This is common among home games, while high-low split games in casinos are usually played [cards speak](#).

In a **simultaneous declaration**, each player must declare his intent at the same time, without knowing what any of his opponents intend. This is often done by taking chips under the table, hiding them in one's hand, and then all players opening their hands at once after everyone has chosen. For example, no chips in hand means that the player declares "high", one chip means "low" and two chips means "swing". In a **consecutive declaration**, each player verbally declares in turn, and later players can therefore use that information to make their decision.

The usual rule in split-pot games with a declaration is that half of the pot is awarded to the highest hand among those who declared "high", and half is awarded to the lowest hand among those who declared "low". If no player declared in one direction, then that half is not split from the pot. That is, if all players declared low and no player declared high, then the low hand wins the whole pot instead of just half. If a player declares "both ways", he must have both the highest hand and the lowest hand clearly, with no losses or ties in either direction, to win the whole pot, otherwise he wins nothing (even if he would otherwise have won half).

Declaring number of cards to draw

Another use of the term "declaration" is the act of declaring how many cards a player intends to draw in a [draw poker](#) game. It's common for all players to declare their draw intentions before any actual cards are dealt, after which all replacements are dealt at once. This protects the players against marked or accidentally exposed cards.

Other declarations

Other uses include declaring the intended amount of a bet or raise ("A verbal declaration in turn is binding" is a common rule in casinos), declaring the value of a hand upon showdown and declaring how one chooses to receive a card in a choose-before [roll your own](#) game. The rules of each of these games may specify how a player is held accountable for these declarations.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Flop

In [poker](#), the **flop** refers to the dealing of the first three face-up cards to the [board](#), or to those three cards themselves, in [community card poker](#) variants, particularly [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold 'em](#).

The three cards are dealt simultaneously following the completion of the opening round of [betting](#). After the flop, there is a second round of betting, which is followed by the dealing of a fourth, or [turn](#), card; and a fifth, or [river](#), card. The three cards are often dealt face-down in a stack, then the stack is turned face-up and quickly slid to one side to expose all three cards, such that a player cannot be seen to be reacting to one particular card.

After the flop, a player will have seen five of the seven cards that will make up his [hand](#) at the [showdown](#). While the flop marks the point at which players have significant information about the value of their hand, three more betting rounds are still to be played out.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Freeroll

A **freeroll** is a situation that arises during [poker](#) play (usually when only two players remain) before the last card has been dealt, in which one player is guaranteed to at least split the pot with his opponent no matter what the final cards are, but where there is some chance he can win the whole pot if certain final cards are dealt. This most commonly occurs in a [high-low split](#) game where one player knows that he has a guaranteed low hand made, his opponent cannot make a better low no matter what the last card is, but the player who is low might possibly catch a lucky card that gives him a straight or flush, winning high as well.

Here's an example from [Texas hold'em](#): Angie holds **KC 10C**, and Burt holds **KH 10H**. After round three, the board is **AC QS JH 4C**. Both players have an ace-high straight, the current [nut hand](#), and so they will most likely split the pot. But if the final card happens to be a club, Burt's straight will lose to Angie's flush. There is no other possible final card that will give Burt more than a split; only Angie can improve, so she is *freerolling* Burt.

If a player knows he has a freeroll, he can raise the pot with impunity, and often a less-skilled opponent with a good hand who does not realize that he is on the wrong end of the freeroll will continue to put in raises with no possible hope of gain.

In Hold'em, it is possible to know you have a freeroll without seeing your opponents cards. After the turn if the board has two aces and two kings all of separate suits, and you hold AK, you are guaranteed a minimum of a split. However, there is a possibility of you getting the nuts, with a guaranteed winning hand, if an Ace or a King hits on the river.

The term is also used to describe a [tournament](#) with no entry fee.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Out

In a [poker](#) game with more than one betting round, an **out** is any unseen card that, if drawn, will improve a player's hand to one that is likely to win. Knowing the number of outs a player has is an important part of poker strategy. For example in [draw poker](#), a hand with four diamonds has nine outs to make a flush: there are 13 diamonds in the deck, and four of them have been seen. If a player has two small pairs, and he believes that it will be necessary for him to make a [full house](#) to win, then he has four outs: the two remaining cards of each rank that he holds.

Note that the hidden cards of a player's opponents may affect the calculation of outs. For example, assume that a [Texas hold 'em](#) board looks like this after the third round: **5S KD 7D JS**, and that a player is holding **AD 10D**. The player's current hand is just a high ace, which is not likely to win unimproved, so the player has a [drawing](#) hand. He has a minimum of seven outs for certain, called [nut outs](#), because they will make his hand the best possible: those are the **2D, 3D, 4D, 6D, 8D, 9D**, and **QD** (which will give him an ace-flush with no possible better hand on the board) and the **QC** and **QH**, which will give him an ace-high straight with no higher hand possible. The **5D** and **JD** will also make him an ace-high flush, so those are *possible outs* since they give him a hand that is likely to win, but they also make it possible for an opponent to have a full house (if the opponent has something like **KS KC**, for example). Likewise, the **QS** will fill his ace-high straight, but will also make it possible for an opponent to have a spade flush. It is possible that an opponent could have as little as something like **7C 9C** (making a pair of sevens); in this case even catching any of the three remaining aces or tens will give the player a pair to beat the opponent's, so those are even more *potential outs*. In sum, the player has seven guaranteed outs, and possibly as many as 18, depending on what cards he expects his opponents to have.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker equipment

The following is a list of equipment used for a game of [poker](#):

- **Cards:** Standard [playing cards](#) are used. In home games it is common to have two decks with distinct backs, and to shuffle the unused deck while each hand is in progress. Casinos typically change decks every few hours, to limit the wear of the cards. It is not unusual for paper cards to become bent quickly, as players often read their "hole" cards by peeking at the corner rather than lifting the card. Card quality can be preserved for longer if players agree not to bend cards, and proper shuffling techniques are used.
- **[Poker chips](#):** Currency is difficult to stack or handle, so most poker games are played with **chips**, or coin-shaped tokens of uniform size and weight, usually 39mm wide and anywhere from 5 to 16 grams in weight, whose money value is determined by their color. Traditionally, poker chips were made of bone; however, modern casino chips are often made of clay. Clay chips are considered

the most upscale variety of poker chip. Another high-end variety of chips are ceramic chips, ceramic chips that can be customized easily cost around \$1 per chip. Plastic chips are also available, at a wide variety of quality levels.

- **Poker table:** A typical poker game will have between two and ten players. A soft table top is preferred to facilitate picking up chips and cards.
- **Lammers:** Lammers are plastic, chip-shaped tokens with text written on them. Most commonly used is a dealer button with either the word "DEALER" or a "D" written on it; this item (also known as the *buck*) indicates who shall deal next. In a casino setting, lammers are also used to indicate which variant is being used, whose turn it is to pay the [blind](#), and as no cash value tournament buy-in chips.
- **Cut card:** This is a thick plastic card, the same size and shape of a playing card. The dealer will place the deck upon this card before dealing, in order to prevent the accidental exposure of the bottom card of the deck. While rarely used in home games, the cut card is universal in casino play.
- **Timer:** If playing a [poker tournament](#), a timer is used to count down periods in which the blinds are at certain levels. When the timer reaches 0:00, the blinds go to a higher level.
- **Card protectors:** In games where all of a player's cards are facedown, some players use items like specialty chips or glass figures to place on top of their cards to protect them from being accidentally discarded.

[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Button](#) | [Playing card](#) | [Poker chip](#)

Button

In [poker](#), the **buck** or **dealer button** is a marker used to indicate the player who is dealing or, in casino games with a house dealer, the player who acts last on that deal (who would be the dealer in a home game). The term **button** is also used for a variety of plastic discs, or lammers, used by casinos to mark status of players.

History

When poker became a popular saloon game in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century, the integrity of the players was unreliable and the honor codes that had regulated gambling for centuries became inadequate. Because the dealer has the greatest opportunity to [cheat](#) (by manipulating the specific cards that players receive, or by inspecting the dealt cards), the players would take turns in this role. To avoid arguments about whose turn it was to deal, the person who was next due to deal would be given a marker. A knife was a common object used as such a marker, and the marker became generally known as a buck as an abbreviated reference to the buck's horn that formed the handle of many knives at that time.

When the dealer had finished dealing the cards he "passes the buck". According to Martin, the earliest use of the phrase in print is in the July 1865 edition of Weekly New

Mexican: "They draw at the commissary, and at poker after they have passed the buck.". The phrase then appears frequently in many sources so it probably originated at about this time. US president Harry S. Truman's use of the slogan "the buck stops here" in speeches, and on a sign on his desk, derives from the adoption of the phrase "passing the buck" as a metaphor for avoiding responsibility.

The use of other small disks as such markers led to the alternative term "button". Silver dollars were later used as markers and it has been suggested that this is the origin of "buck" as a slang term for "dollar," though by no means is there universal agreement on this subject.

Dealer button

Today, a white plastic disc with the word "Dealer" is typically used as a dealer button in casinos and home games. Beyond marking the player in the dealer position, some games use the button to signify transitory details about the hand being played—for example, a game with a kill may use a button with the word "Kill" on only one side, which is turned up during a hand that the kill is in effect; or a [dealer's choice](#) game at a casino may use a placard with the name of the game selected by the player in the dealer position. Harrah's Entertainment has begun utilizing the space on the button for advertising; all dealer buttons at the 2005 World Series of Poker featured the logo for Degree antiperspirant.

Other buttons

In a cash game in a casino, the chip tray may contain an assortment of plastic discs, or lammers, that the dealer may place in front of a player's seat under certain conditions. The following table lists some buttons and their significance:

Button - Use

[Missed blind](#) - Placed in front of a chip stack on the hand where the seat is due for one of the blinds, but no player is present. The player will have to make up the missed blinds to reenter the game, or else wait for the deal to rotate around the table until it his big blind again.

[Third man walking](#) - Marks a player that left his seat when two other players were already away from the table.

No player - Used to mark a chip stack where no player has been present for some duration of time. Typically each time a new dealer comes to the table (every half hour) another "No player" button will be added to an unattended stack. Depending on house rules, a chip stack that has collected two or three "No player" buttons may be eligible to have the chips picked up by the house, to free the seat for another player.

Reserved - May be placed in front of an empty seat, to hold the seat for a player that is known to be coming.

Seat change - These buttons are given to a player upon request, and signify that the player has first choice of seats, if the opportunity to move arises.

References

[Martin, Garry. 'Pass the buck', *The Phrase Finder*](#) Retrieved May 13, 2005
[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Playing card

A **playing card** is a typically hand-sized piece of heavy paper or thin plastic used for playing [card games](#). A complete set of cards is a **pack** or **deck**. Playing cards are often used as props in magic tricks, as well as occult practices such as cartomancy, and a number of card games involve (or can be used to support) gambling. As a result, their use sometimes meets with disapproval from some religious groups (such as a minority of conservative Christians). They are also a popular collectible (as distinct from the cards made specifically for collectible trading card games). Specialty and novelty decks are commonly produced for collectors, often with political, cultural, or educational themes. One side of each card (the "front" or "face") carries markings that distinguish it from the others and determine its use under the rules of the particular game being played, while the other side (the "back") is identical for all cards, usually a plain color or abstract design. In most games, the cards are assembled into a "deck" (or "pack"), and their order is randomized by a procedure called "shuffling" to provide an element of chance in the game.

History

Early history

The origin of playing cards is obscure, but it is almost certain that they began in China after the invention of paper. Ancient Chinese "money cards" have four "suits": coins (or cash), strings of coins (which may have been misinterpreted as sticks from crude drawings), myriads of strings, and tens of myriads. These were represented by ideograms, with numerals of 2–9 in the first three suits and numerals 1–9 in the "tens of myriads". Wilkinson suggests in *The Chinese origin of playing cards* that the first cards may have been actual paper currency which were both the tools of gaming and the stakes being played for. The designs on modern Mahjong tiles and dominoes likely evolved from those earliest playing cards. The Chinese word pái (L) is used to describe both paper cards and gaming tiles. An Indian origin for playing cards has been suggested by the resemblance of symbols on some early European decks to the ring, sword, cup, and baton classically depicted in the four hands of Indian statues. This is an area that still needs research. The time and manner of the introduction of cards into Europe are matters of dispute. The 38th canon of the council of Worcester (1240) is often quoted as evidence of cards having been known in England in the middle of the 13th century; but the games *de rege et regina* there mentioned are now thought to more likely have been chess. If cards were generally known in Europe as early as 1278, it is very remarkable that Petrarch, in his dialogue that treats

gaming, never once mentions them. Boccaccio, Chaucer and other writers of that time specifically refer to various games, but there is not a single passage in their works that can be fairly construed to refer to cards. Passages have been quoted from various works, of or relative to this period, but modern research leads to the supposition that the word rendered cards has often been mistranslated or interpolated.

It is likely that the ancestors of modern cards arrived in Europe from the Mamelukes of Egypt in the late 1300s, by which time they had already assumed a form very close to those in use today. In particular, the Mameluke deck contained 52 cards comprising four "suits": polo sticks, coins, swords, and cups. Each suit contained ten "spot" cards (cards identified by the number of suit symbols or "pips" they show) and three "court" cards named malik (King), n'ib malik (Viceroy or Deputy King), and thn+ n'ib (Second or Under-Deputy). The Mameluke court cards showed abstract designs not depicting persons (at least not in any surviving specimens) though they did bear the names of military officers. A complete pack of Mameluke playing cards was discovered by L.A. Mayer in the Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul, in 1939; this particular complete pack was not made before 1400, but the complete deck allowed matching to a private fragment dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century. There is some evidence to suggest that this deck may have evolved from an earlier 48-card deck that had only two court cards per suit, and some further evidence to suggest that earlier Chinese cards brought to Europe may have travelled to Persia, which then influenced the Mameluke and other Egyptian cards of the time before their reappearance in Europe.

It is not known whether these cards influenced the design of the Indian cards used for the game of Ganjifa, or whether the Indian cards may have influenced these. Regardless, the Indian cards have many distinctive features: they are round, generally hand painted with intricate designs, and comprise more than four suits (often as many as twelve).

Spread across Europe and early design changes

In the late 1300s, the use of playing cards spread rapidly across Europe. The first widely accepted references to cards are in 1371 in Spain, in 1377 in Switzerland, and, in 1380, they are referenced in many locations including Florence, Paris, and Barcelona. A Paris ordinance dated 1369 does not mention cards; its 1377 update includes cards. In the account-books of Johanna, duchess of Brabant, and her husband, Wenceslaus of Luxemburg, there is an entry dated May 14, 1379 as follows: "Given to Monsieur and Madame four peters, two forms, value eight and a half moutons, wherewith to buy a pack of cards". An early mention of a distinct series of playing cards is the entry of Charles or Charbot Poupart, treasurer of the household of Charles VI of France, in his book of accounts for 1392 or 1393, which records payment for the painting of three sets or packs of cards, which were evidently already well known.

It is clear that the earliest cards were executed by hand, like those designed for Charles VI. However, this was quite expensive, so other means were needed to mass-produce them. It is possible that the art of wood engraving, which led to the art of printing, developed because of the demand for implements of play. If the assumption is true that the cards of that period were printed from wood blocks, the early card makers or cardpainters of Ulm,

Nuremberg, and Augsburg, from about 1418 to 1450, were most likely also wood engravers.

Many early woodcuts were colored using a stencil, so it would seem that the art of depicting and coloring figures by means of stencil plates was well known when wood engraving was first introduced. No playing cards engraved on wood exist whose creation can be confirmed as earlier than 1423 (the earliest-dated wood engraving generally accepted). However, in this period professional card makers were established in Germany, so it is probable that wood engraving was employed to produce cuts for sacred subjects before it was applied to cards, and that there were hand-painted and stencilled cards before there were wood engravings of saints. The German *Briefmaler* or card-painter probably progressed into the wood engraver; but there is no proof that the earliest wood engravers were the card-makers.

The Europeans experimented with the structure of playing cards, particularly in the 1400s. Europeans changed the court cards to represent European royalty and attendants, originally "king", "chevalier", and "knave" (or "servant"). Queens were introduced in a number of different ways. In an early surviving German pack (dated in the 1440s), Queens replace Kings in two of the suits as the highest card. Throughout the 1400s, 56-card decks containing a King, Queen, Knight, and Valet were common. Suits also varied; many makers saw no need to have a standard set of names for the suits, so early decks often had different suit names (typically 4 suits, although 5 suits also had been common and other structures are also known). The cards manufactured by German printers used in the later standard the suits of hearts, bells, leaves, and acorns still present in Eastern and Southeastern German decks today used for Skat and other games, in the very early time suits took many vary variations, however. Later Italian and Spanish cards of the 15th century used swords, batons, cups, and coins. It is likely that the Tarot deck was invented in Italy at that time, though it is often mistakenly believed to have been imported into Europe by Gypsies (see detailed studies, also the article Tarot). While originally (and still in some places, notably Europe) used for the game of Tarocchi, the Tarot deck today is more often used for cartomancy and other occult practices. This probably came about in the 1780s, when occult philosophers mistakenly associated the symbols on Tarot cards with Egyptian hieroglyphs.

The four suits (hearts, diamonds, spades, clubs) now used in most of the world originated in France, approximately in 1480. These suits have generally prevailed because decks using them could be made more cheaply; the former suits were all drawings which had to be reproduced by woodcuts, but the French suits could be made by stencil. The *trèfle*, so named for its resemblance to the trefoil leaf, was probably copied from the acorn; the *pique* similarly from the leaf of the German suits, while its name derived from the sword of the Italian suits (alternative opinion: derived from the German word "Spaten", which is a tool like "Schippe" and in optical sense similar to the Pique-sign; "Schippe" is a German slang-name for Pique). In England the French suits were used, and are named hearts, clubs (corresponding to *trèfle*, the French symbol being joined to the Italian name, *bastoni*), spades (corresponding to the French *pique*, but having the Italian name, *spade* = sword) and diamonds. This confusion of names and symbols is accounted for by Chatto thus:

"If cards were actually known in Italy and Spain in the latter part of the 14th century, it is not unlikely that the game was introduced into this country by some of the English

soldiers who had served under Hawkwood and other free captains in the wars of Italy and Spain. However this may be, it seems certain that the earliest cards commonly used in this country were of the same kind, with respect to the marks of the suits, as those used in Italy and Spain."

Court cards have likewise undergone some changes in design and name. Early court cards were elaborate full-length figures; the French in particular often gave them the names of particular heroes and heroines from history and fable. A prolific manufacturing center in the 1500s was Rouen, which originated many of the basic design elements of court cards still present in modern decks. It is likely that the Rouennais cards were popular imports in England, establishing their design as standard there, though other designs became more popular in Europe (particularly in France, where the Parisian design became standard). There is some speculation that the common King of Hearts was designed as a tribute to Donatello's *Judith and Holophernes*.

Rouen courts are traditionally named as follows: the kings of spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs are David, Alexander, Caesar and Charles (Charlemagne), respectively. The knaves (or "jacks"; French "valet") are Hector (prince of Troy), La Hire (comrade-in-arms to Joan of Arc), Ogier (a knight of Charlemagne) and Judas Maccabeus (who led the Jewish rebellion against the Syrians). The queens are Pallas (warrior goddess; equivalent to the Greek Athena or Roman Minerva), Rachel (biblical mother of Joseph), Argine (the origin of which is obscure; it is an anagram of regina, which is Latin for queen) and Judith (from Book of Judith). Parisian tradition uses the same names, but assigns them to different suits: the kings of spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs are David, Charles, Caesar, and Alexander; the queens are Pallas, Judith, Rachel, and Argine; the knaves are Ogier, La Hire, Hector, and Judas Maccabee. Oddly, the Parisian names have become more common in modern use, even with cards of Rouennais design. (See the Nine Worthies for another medieval collection of knightly heroes.)

Later design changes

In early games the kings were *always* the highest card in their suit. However, as early as the late 1400s special significance began to be placed on the nominally lowest card, now called the Ace, so that it sometimes became the highest card and the Two, or Deuce, the lowest. This concept may have been hastened in the late 1700s by the French Revolution, where games began being played "ace high" as a symbol of lower classes rising in power above the royalty. The term "Ace" itself comes from a dicing term in Anglo-Norman language, which is itself derived from the Latin *as* (the smallest unit of coinage). Another dicing term, *trey* (3), sometimes shows up in playing card games.

Corner and edge indices appeared in the mid-1800s, which enabled people to hold their cards close together in a fan with one hand (instead of the two hands previously used). Before this time, the lowest court card in an English deck was officially termed the *Knave*, but its abbreviation ("Kn") was too similar to the King ("K"). However, from the 1600s on the Knave had often been termed the *Jack*, a term borrowed from the game All Fours where the Knave of trumps is termed the Jack. All Fours was considered a low-class game, so the

use of the term Jack at one time was considered vulgar. The use of indices changed the formal name of the lowest court card to Jack.

This was followed by the innovation of reversible court cards. Reversible court cards meant that players would not be tempted to make upside-down court cards right side up. Before this, other players could often get a hint of what other players' hands contained by watching them reverse their cards. This innovation required abandoning some of the design elements of the earlier full-length courts.

The joker is an American innovation. Created for the Alsatian game of Euchre, it spread to Europe from America along with the spread of [Poker](#). Although the joker card often bears the image of a fool (possibly derived from the stereotypical village idiot), which is one of the images of the Tarot deck, it is not believed that there is any relation. In contemporary decks, one of the two jokers is often more colorful or more intricately detailed than the other, though this feature is not used in most card games. The two jokers are often differentiated as "Big" and "Little," or more commonly, "Red" and "Black." In many card games the jokers are not used. Unlike face cards, the design of jokers varies widely. Many manufacturers use them to carry trademark designs.

In the twentieth century, a means for coating cards with plastic was invented, and has taken over the market, producing a durable product. An example of what the old cardboard product was like is documented in Buster Keaton's silent comedy *The Navigator*, in which the forlorn comic tries to shuffle and play cards during a rainstorm.

Alleged symbolism

Popular legend holds that the composition of a deck of cards has religious, metaphysical or astronomical significance: typical numerological elements of the explanation are that the four suits represent the four seasons, the 13 cards per suit are the 13 phases of the lunar cycle, black and red are for day and night, the 52 cards of the deck (joker excluded) symbolizes the number of weeks in a year, and finally, if the value of each card is added up — and 1 is added, which is generally explained away as being for a single joker — the result is 365, the number of days in a year. The context for these stories is sometimes given to suggest that the interpretation is a joke, generally being the purported explanation given by someone caught with a deck of cards in order to suggest that their intended purpose was not gambling ([Urban Legends Reference Pages article](#)).

Playing cards today

Anglo-American

The primary deck of fifty-two playing cards in use today, called **Anglo-American playing cards**, includes thirteen ranks of each of the four French suits, spades (S), hearts (H), diamonds (D) and clubs (C), with reversible Rouennais court cards. Each suit includes an ace, depicting a single symbol of its suit; a king, queen, and jack, each depicted with a symbol of its suit; and ranks two through ten, with each card depicting that many symbols (*pips*) of its suit. Two (sometimes one or four) Jokers, often distinguishable with one being

more colorful than the other, are included in commercial decks but many games require one or both to be removed before play. Modern playing cards carry index labels on opposite corners (rarely, all four corners) to facilitate identifying the cards when they overlap.

The fanciful design and manufacturer's logo commonly displayed on the Ace of Spades began under the reign of James I of England, who passed a law requiring an insignia on that card as proof of payment of a tax on local manufacture of cards. Until August 4, 1960, decks of playing cards printed and sold in the United Kingdom were liable for taxable duty and the Ace of Spades carried an indication of the name of the printer and the fact that taxation had been paid on the cards. The packs were also sealed with a government duty wrapper.

Though specific design elements of the court cards are rarely used in game play, a few are notable. The Jack of Spades and Jack of Hearts are drawn in profile, while the rest of the courts are shown in full face (the exception being the King of Diamonds), leading to the former being called the "one-eyed" jacks. When deciding which cards are to be made wild in some games, the phrase, "acey, deucey, one-eyed jack," is sometimes used, which means that aces, twos, and the one-eyed jacks are all wild. Another such variation, "deuces, aces, one-eyed faces," is used to indicate aces, twos, the Jack of Hearts, the Jack of Spades, and the King of Diamonds are wild. The King of Hearts is shown with a sword behind his head, leading to the nickname "suicide king". The King of Diamonds is armed with an ax while the other three kings are armed with swords. The King of Diamonds is sometimes referred to as "the man with the ax" because of this. The Ace of Spades, unique in its large, ornate spade, is sometimes said to be the death card, and in some games is used as a trump card. The Queen of Spades appears to hold a scepter and is sometimes known as "the bedpost queen."

There are theories about who the court cards represent. For example, the Queen of Hearts is believed by some to be a representation of Elizabeth of York - the Queen consort of King Henry VII of England. The United States Playing Card Company suggests that in the past, the King of Hearts was Charlemagne, the King of Diamonds was Julius Caesar, the King of Clubs was Alexander the Great, and the King of Spades was the Biblical King David. However the Kings, Queens and Jacks of standard Anglo/American cards today do not represent anyone. They stem from designs produced in Rouen before 1516 and by 1540-67 these Rouen designs show well-executed pictures in the court cards with the typical court costumes of the time. In these early cards the Jack of Spades, Jack of Hearts and the King of Diamonds are shown from the rear, with their heads turned back over the shoulder so that they are seen in profile. However the Rouen cards were so badly copied in England that the current designs are gross distortions of the originals.

Other oddities such as the lack of a moustache on the King of Hearts also have little significance. The King of Hearts did originally have a moustache but it was lost by poor copying of the original design. Similarly the objects carried by the court cards have no significance. They merely differentiate one court card from another and have also become distorted over time.

The most common sizes for playing cards are poker size ($2\frac{1}{2}in \times 3\frac{1}{2}in$; $62\text{ mm} \times 88\text{ mm}$, or B8 size according to ISO 216) and bridge size ($2\frac{1}{4}in \times 3\frac{1}{2}in$, approx. $56\text{ mm} \times 88\text{ mm}$), the latter being more suitable for games such as bridge in which a large number of cards must be held concealed in a player's hand. Interestingly, in most casino poker games, the

bridge sized card is used. Other sizes are also available, such as a smaller size (usually $1\frac{3}{4}in \times 2\frac{1}{2}in$, approx. $44\text{ mm} \times 66\text{ mm}$) for solitaire and larger ones for card tricks.

Some decks include additional design elements. Casino blackjack decks may include markings intended for a machine to check the ranks of cards, or shifts in rank location to allow a manual check via inlaid mirror. Many casino decks and solitaire decks have four indices instead of the usual two. Many decks have large indices, largely for use in [stud poker](#) games, where being able to read cards from a distance is a benefit and hand sizes are small. Some decks use four colors for the suits in order to make it easier to tell them apart: the most common set of colors is black (spades S), red (hearts H), blue (diamonds D) and green (clubs C).

When giving the full written name of a specific card, the rank is given first followed by the suit, e.g., "Ace of Spades". Shorthand notation may list the rank first "AS" (as is typical when discussing [poker](#)) or list the suit first (as is typical in listing several cards in bridge) "SAKQ". Tens may be either abbreviated to T or written as 10.

German

German suits may have different appearances. Many southern Germans prefer decks with hearts, bells, leaves, and acorns (for hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs), as mentioned above. In the game Skat, Eastern Germany players used the German deck, while players in western Germany mainly used the French deck. After the reunification a compromise deck was created, with French symbols, but German colors. Therefore, many "French" decks in Germany now have yellow or orange diamonds and green spades.

example [Old German playing cards](#) as produced by [Altenburger Spielkartenfabrik](#)

Central European

The cards of Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, and southern Tyrol use the same colors (hearts, bells, leaves and acorns) as the cards of Southern Germany. They usually have a deck of 32 or 36 cards. The numbering includes VII, VIII, IX, X, Under, Over, King and Ace. Some variations with 36 cards have also the number VI. The VI in bells is having also the function like a joker in some games and it's named Welli.

These cards are illustrated with a special picture series that was born in the times before the 1848-49 Hungarian Freedom Fights, when revolutionary movements were awakening all over in Europe. The Aces show the four seasons: the ace of hearts is spring, the ace of bells is summer, the ace of leaves is autumn and the ace of acorns is winter. The characters of the Under and Over cards were taken from the drama, William Tell, written by Schiller in 1804, that was shown at Kolozsvár (today Cluj-Napoca) in 1827. It was long believed that the card was invented in Vienna at the Card Painting Workshop of Ferdinand Piatnik, however in 1974 the very first deck was found in an English Private Collection, and it has shown the name of the inventor and creator of deck as Schneider József, a Master Card Painter at Pest, and the date of its creation as 1837. He has chosen the characters of a Swiss drama as his characters for his over and under cards, however if he would have

chosen Hungarian heroes or freedom fighters, his deck of cards would have never made it into distribution, due to the heavy censorship of the government at the time. Interestingly, although the characters on the cards are Swiss, these cards are unknown in Switzerland.

Games that are played with this deck in Hungary include Ulti, Snapszer (or 66), Zsírozás, Preferansz and Lórum. Explanations of these games can be found at [The Card Games Website](#).

Switzerland

In the German speaking part of Switzerland, the prevalent deck consists of 36 playing cards with the following suits: roses, bells, acorns and shields. The ranks of the alternate deck, from low to high, are: 6, 7, 8, 9, banner (10), "under", "over", king and ace.

Italian

Italian playing cards most commonly consist of a deck of 40 cards, and are used for playing Italian regional games such as Scopa or Briscola. Since these cards first appeared in the late 14th century A.D. when each region in Italy was a separately ruled province, there is no official Italian pattern. There are 16 official regional patterns in use in different parts of the country (about one per province). These sixteen patterns are split amongst 4 regions:

- Northern Italian Suits - Triestine, Trevigiane, Trentine, Bolognese, Bergamasche
- Spanish-like Suits - Napoletane, Sarde, Romagnole, Sicilian, Piacentine.
- French Suits - Giovanese, Lombarde, Toscane, Piemontesi.
- German Suits - Salisburghesi, South Tyrol, Tirolian(once Austria).

The suits are coins (sometimes suns or sunbursts), swords, cups and clubs (sometimes batons), and each suit contains an ace (or one), numbers two through seven, and three face cards. The face cards are:

- King (Re) - a man standing, wearing a crown
- Knight (Caval or Cavallo) - a man sitting on a horse (can be referred to as a donna)
- Jack (Fante) - a younger man standing, without a crown
- In the modern Modiano Trieste version of the deck, the Jack (Fante) is sometimes mistakenly referred to as a 'donna' in southern regions, and stands on the ground without a crown, and is counted lower than the Knight. In actual fact, the complementary game rule cards for Briscola and Scopa from Modiano actually refer to the Knight as either the Cavallo or Donna, probably staying inline with the French version of the Dame/Regina or as more commonly known the 'Queen'.

Unlike Anglo-American cards, some Italian cards do not have any numbers (or letters) identifying their value. The cards' value is determined by identifying the face card or counting the number of suit characters.

Example: "[Triestine](#)" playing cards manufactured by [Modiano](#)

Spanish

The four aces of the **Spanish playing cards** (*naipes*), as styled in the best-selling deck made by Heraclio Fournier. The *palos* (suits) are (left to right, top to bottom): *copas* (cups), *oros* (coins), *bastos* (batons) and *espadas* (swords). Notice the pattern of interruptions (*la pinta*) that identifies each suit in the horizontal line section of the card frames.

The traditional Spanish deck (referred to as *baraja española* in Spanish) is a direct descendant of the Tarot deck. However, like most other decks derived from it, the Spanish deck kept only the minor arcana (with the exception of the 10s and the queen of each suit, which were dropped), while all of the major arcana from the Tarot deck were discarded. Being a Latin-suited deck (like the Italian deck), it is organized into four *palos* (suits) that closely match those of the Tarot deck: *oros* ("golds" or coins, *cf.* the Tarot suit of pentacles), *copas* (beakers), *espadas* (swords) and *bastos* (batons or clubs, *cf.* the Tarot suit of wands). Apart from its characteristic icon, each suit can also be identified by a pattern of interruptions in the horizontal sections of the quadrangular line that frames each card (this pattern is known as *la pinta*): none for *oros*, one for *copas*, two for *espadas* and three for *bastos*.

The cards (*naipes* or *cartas* in Spanish) are all numbered, but unlike in the standard Anglo-French deck, the card numbered 10 is the first of the court cards (instead of a card depicting ten coins/cups/swords/batons); so each suit has only twelve cards. The three court or face cards in each suit are as follows: *la sota* ("the knave", jack or page, numbered 10 and equivalent to the Anglo-French card J), *el caballo* ("the horse", horseman, knight or cavalier, numbered 11 and used instead of the Anglo-French card Q; note the original Tarot deck has both a cavalier and a queen of each suit, while the Anglo-French deck dropped the former, and the Spanish deck dropped the latter), and finally *el rey* ("the king", numbered 12 and equivalent to the Anglo-French card K). Many Spanish games involve forty-card decks, with the 8s and 9s removed, similar to the standard Italian deck.

The Spanish deck is used not only in Spain, but also in other countries where Spain maintained an influence (*e.g.*, the Philippines and Puerto Rico) 1. Among the games played with this deck are: *el mus* (a very popular and highly regarded vying game of Basque origin), *la brisca*, *el tute* (with many variations), *el guiñote*, *la escoba* (a trick-taking game), *el julepe*, *el cinquillo*, *las siete y media*, *la mona*, *el truc* (or *truco*), and *el cuajo* (a matching game from the Philippines).

Japanese

The standard 54-card deck is also commonly known as a poker deck or—in Japan—a Trump deck, to differentiate it from "dedicated" card games such as UNO, or other dynamic card decks like Hanafuda and Kabufuda.

Playing card symbols in Unicode

The Unicode standard defines 8 characters for card suits in the Miscellaneous Symbols block, from U+2660 to U+2667:

U+2660 <i>dec: 9824</i>	U+2661 <i>dec: 9825</i>	U+2662 <i>dec: 9826</i>	U+2663 <i>dec: 9827</i>
♠	♥	♦	♣
BLACK SPADE SUIT	WHITE HEART SUIT	WHITE DIAMOND SUIT	BLACK CLUB SUIT
♠ ♠ ♠	♡ ♡	♢ ♢	♣ ♣ ♣
U+2664 <i>dec: 9828</i>	U+2665 <i>dec: 9829</i>	U+2666 <i>dec: 9830</i>	U+2667 <i>dec: 9831</i>
♠	♥	♦	♣
WHITE SPADE SUIT	BLACK HEART SUIT	BLACK DIAMOND SUIT	WHITE CLUB SUIT
♤ ♤	♥ ♥ ♥	♦ ♦ ♦	♧ ♧

References

- Parlett, David. *The Oxford Guide to Card Games*. 1990. ISBN 0-19-214165-1.
[Home](#) | [Up](#) | [Burn card](#) | [Curse of Scotland](#) | [High card by suit](#) | [Rounder](#)

Burn card

In [card games](#), a **burn card** is a [playing card](#) dealt from the top of a deck, and discarded ("burned"), unused by the players. Burn cards are almost always placed in the discard pile face down, players do not know what card was burned.

Burning is performed in casinos. It deters a form of cheating known as card marking; in [poker](#), the top card of the deck stub is burned at the beginning of each betting round, so that players who might have been able to read markings on that card during the previous round are less able to take advantage of that information. Knowledge of a burn card might be marginally useful, such as knowing there is one less Ace in the deck, but far less so than having it in play. ^[1]

Burning also provides extra cards for use when an irregularity of play occurs. Sometimes a mis-dealt card (such as one of the down cards in poker that has flashed during the deal) will be used as the burn card — in those cases, the card should be immediately placed face up on the deck after the deal is complete.

Notes

- ^[1] [What is a burn card and why is it dealt?](#), rec.gambling.poker FAQ
[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Curse of Scotland

The curse of Scotland, also known as the **Scourge of Scotland**, is a term used in [poker](#), bridge and various other [card games](#) for the nine of diamonds. The exact origins of the term are unknown but several theories exist.

The most common myth is that the term arose after the Massacre of Glencoe due to a resemblance in the playing card and Sir John Dalrymple coat of arms. Another myth is that the order for no quarter at the Battle of Culloden written on a nine of diamonds by the Duke of Cumberland.

Other less popular theories include the term deriving from a tax levied to pay for nine diamonds stolen from the crown of Scotland or that the term is a mispronunciation of "The Cross of Scotland" due to a resemblance in the patterns of St. Andrew's Saltire and the playing card.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

High card by suit

High card by suit refers to assigning relative values to [playing cards](#) of equal rank based on their suit.

Most [poker](#) games do not rank suits; the ace of spades is just as good as the ace of clubs. However, small issues (such as deciding who deals first) are sometimes resolved by dealing one card to each player. If two players draw cards of the same rank, one way to break the tie is to use an arbitrary hierarchy of suits.

No standard ranking of suits exists for all poker games. Even within a particular poker variant, the order of suits differs by location. (For example, the ranking most commonly used in the United States is not the one typically used in Italy.) Two common conventions are:

- Alternating colors: **diamonds** (lowest), followed by **clubs**, **hearts**, and **spades** (highest). (This ranking is also used in the Chinese card game Big Two or Choi Dai Di).
- Alphabetical order: **clubs** (lowest), followed by **diamonds**, **hearts**, and **spades** (highest). (This ranking is also used in the game of bridge). This mnemonic rank is consistent with the suits representation of the four major divisions of medieval society, Spades (nobility, highest), Hearts (clergy), Diamonds (merchants), and Clubs (peasants).

Cards are always compared by rank first, and only then by suit. For example, using the "alphabetical order" ranking, the ace of clubs ranks higher than any king, but lower than the ace of diamonds. High card by suit is *never* used to break ties between [poker hands](#), but can be used in the following situations, as well as various others, based upon the circumstances of the particular game:

- Randomly selecting a player or players.

To randomly select a player to deal, to choose the game, to move to another table, or for other reasons, deal each player one card and the player with high card by suit is selected. Multiple players can be selected this way.

- Assigning the bring-in.

In games such as [Seven-card stud](#), where the player with the lowest-ranking face-up card is required to open the first betting round for a minimal amount, ties can be broken by suit.

- Awarding odd chips in a split pot.

In [High-low split](#) games, or when two players' hands tie, the pot must be [split](#) evenly between them. When there is an odd amount of money in the pot that can't be split evenly, the odd low-denomination chip can be given to the player whose hand contains the high card by suit. (This solution is not necessary in games with [blinds](#), in which case the odd chip between high and low is awarded to the high hand, and the odd chip between a split high or split low is awarded to the first player following the dealer button.)

- Breaking ties in a chip race

During [poker tournaments](#), a [chip race](#) is used to "color up" large numbers of smaller-denomination chips, and a modified deal is used to assign leftover chips. Ties in the deal are broken by suit.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Rounder

A **rounder** is a skilled card shark who makes his/her living entirely at playing [cards](#). This the most common use of the word.

The term "rounder" carries a certain respect amongst card players, as they know anyone with that title knows their way around a table and is a person to be taken seriously, unlike the opposite of a rounder, a "[fish](#)." The term sometimes also implies a player making a living by "hustling" less experienced players in games during their "rounds".

Some noted rounders include Doyle Brunson, Amarillo Slim, and Sailor Roberts. A movie about poker titled Rounders was made in 1998, starring Matt Damon and Edward Norton.

- A score in a game of [rounders](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker chip

Casino **poker chips** are special tokens representing a fixed amount of money. Especially in cardrooms and casinos, poker chips are also known as **checks**.

Construction and design

Poker chips are fabricated with complicated graphics and edge spot patterns intending to make them difficult to counterfeit. The process used to make these chips is a trade secret and expensive - typically done on high pressure compression molding machines.

The typical material of construction is not clay as is sometimes believed, but a ceramic material with clay added for texture and weight. The breakable, clay chips of the 1960s and 1970s are no longer manufactured. The clay composition of modern chips varies by manufacturer, and is typically very slight (1-10%).

The chips used in American casinos generally weigh between 9.5 grams and 10 grams each. The chips sold for home use vary much more, depending on manufacturer and construction.

Common designs for home use depict the six faces of a die or the suit symbols around the edge on the face of the chip. They are typically manufactured with injection molding technology using ABS plastic. Some chips are molded around a small metal disc, called a slug, for weight.

European chips often come in Mother of Pearl. The higher value chips are often shaped like plaques.

Colors

The most common colors used at United States casinos to differentiate between chip denominations are:

- White or blue: \$1
- Pink: \$2.50
- Red: \$5
- Blue: \$10
- Green: \$25 [\$20 in some casinos]
- Black: \$100
- Lavender: \$500

With most chips bought in stores, the chips inside are a usually equal mixture of \$1, \$5, \$10 and \$25 [and sometimes \$100]

\$2.50 chips are almost exclusively used for blackjack tables, since a natural typically pays 3:2 and most wagers are in increments of \$5. However, the Tropicana Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey has used pink chips in \$7.50-\$15 and \$10-\$20 poker games. Low-denomination yellow chips can vary in value: \$20 by statute in Atlantic City and Illinois (which, oddly, also uses "mustard yellow" \$0.50 chips); \$5 at most Southern California poker rooms; \$2 at Foxwoods' poker room in Ledyard, Connecticut and at Casino del Sol in Tucson, Arizona; and \$0.50 at Potawatomi Casino in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Blue chips are occasionally used for \$10, most notably by statute in Atlantic City. In Las Vegas and California, most casinos use blue or gray for \$1 chips.

Chips are commonly available in \$1000 denominations, depending on the wagering limits of the casino in question. Such chips are often yellow or orange and of a large size. Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and other areas which permit high wagers typically have chips

available in \$5000, \$10000, \$25000, and higher denominations; the colors for these vary wildly.

European casinos use a similar scheme, though certain venues (such as Aviation Club de France) use pink for €2 and blue for €10. European casinos also use plaques rather than chips for high denominations (usually in the €1000 and higher range).

Casino-style chips can be bought for home games, but the price is approximately US\$1 per chip.

Generic poker chip sets can be bought at a much lower price, less than US\$0.20 per chip. These simulate the weight and feel of casino chips, but are of a very inferior quality.

Security

Each casino has a unique set of chips, even if the casino is part of a larger company. This distinguishes a casino's chips from others, since each chip and token on the gaming floor has to be backed up with the appropriate amount of cash. In addition, with the exception of Nevada, casinos are not permitted to honor another casino's chips.

The security features of casino chips are numerous. Artwork is of a very high resolution or of photographic quality. Custom color combinations on the chip edge (edge spots) are usually distinctive to a particular casino. Certain chips incorporate RFID technology, such as those at the new Wynn Casino in Las Vegas.

Counterfeit chips are rare. High levels of surveillance, along with staff familiarity with chip design and coloring, make passing fake chips difficult. Casinos, though, are prepared for this situation. On one such occasion, the casino removed all chips from the gaming floor and replaced them with new sets with alternative markings, which resulted in the arrest of the attempted counterfeiters.

Casino chips used in [tournaments](#) are usually much cheaper and much simpler in design. Because the chips have no cash value, usually chips are designed with a single color (usually differing in shade or tone from the version on the casino floor), a smaller diameter, and a basic mark on the interior to distinguish denominations; however, at certain events (such as the [World Series of Poker](#) or other televised poker), chips approach quality levels of chips on the floor.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Rake

The **rake** is the scaled commission fee taken by a casino operating a [poker](#) game. It is generally 5-10% of the [pot](#) in each [poker hand](#), up to a predetermined maximum amount, but not only can this percentage be anything, there are other non-percentage ways for a casino to take the rake, plus other means for a casino to earn revenue from players (e.g. serving meals). Poker is a player versus player game and the house does not wager against its players (unlike blackjack or roulette) so this fee is the principal mechanism to generate revenues.

It is primarily levied by an establishment which supplies the necessary services for the game to take place. In [online poker](#) it covers the various costs of operation such as support, software and personnel. In traditional brick and mortar casinos it is also used to cover the costs involved with providing a [dealer](#) for the game and the physical building in which the game takes place.

The rake is often referred to as the "hidden player" because in most poker games it is a significant drain on player profitability.

Mechanism

There are three predominant types of rake which are applied depending upon the format of poker game being played.

During [ring games](#) the percentage rake is taken by the dealer based on the amount of money being wagered by the players. In a live casino, the dealer manually removes [chips](#) from the pot while the hand is being played and sets them aside to be dropped into a secure box after completion of the hand. Online, the rake is taken automatically by the game software. Some software shows the rake amount next to a graphical representation of the dealer and takes it incrementally between the rounds of betting, whereas other software programs wait until the entire hand is over and then takes it from the pot total before giving the rest to the winner of the hand.

The second type of rake is "time collection", or "table charge", where each player pays a set fee for playing in a ring game, typically every half hour, but another method could be a monthly subscription fee at an online site.

The third type of rake is an entrance fee taken when entering a [poker tournament](#).

Legality

In all known legal jurisdictions taking a rake from a poker table is explicitly illegal if the party taking the rake does not have the proper gaming licences and/or permits. The laws of many jurisdictions are written in such a manner that they do not prohibit the playing of poker for money at a private dwelling, so long as nobody is taking a rake.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Ring game

Ring games, also called **cash games** or **live action games**, are [poker](#) games played with "real" [chips](#) and money on the line, usually with no predetermined end time. In contrast, a [poker tournament](#) is played with tournament chips (worth nothing outside the tournament) with a definite end condition (usually, only one player left).

Players may freely buy into or cash out of a ring game between hands. However, it is normally prohibited for a player to remove a portion of his or her chips from the table. This is known as "[going south](#)". For example, if a player buys in for \$100, then wins \$100 (for a total stack of \$200), the player may not remove the original \$100 buy-in.

One difference between tournaments and cash games is that the blind/ante structure of tournaments increases periodically over the course of the tournament, whereas the blind/ante structure of cash games remains constant. Another difference between the tournaments and cash games is that a tournament sticks with a predetermined style of poker, and cash game players, depending on [house rules](#), may have the option of playing other types of card games. Some [online](#) cash games offer a variety of choices limited only by the game software, but do not offer all the possible more obscure games, like [H.O.R.S.E](#) or other mixed games, that can be played in-person.

In "no limit" poker ring games, some cardrooms have a maximum buy-in for ring games that prevents players from buying a chip stack size advantage. In limit poker games, there is seldom a maximum buy-in because betting limits on each hand already limit the advantage of having a larger chip stack.

In a casino, a [rake](#) is usually taken from a pot if the player is in a hand while a flop is shown.

An example of a ring game is broadcast on the United States television network GSN as "High Stakes Poker".

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Suited connectors

Suited connectors is a [poker](#) term referring to pocket cards which are of the same suit and consecutive in rank. Example: **AS 2S, QH JH, 5D 4D**. In [Texas hold'em](#), suited connectors play well against multiple players when they can see the flop cheaply. A player will generally not raise with them, because raising usually causes a few players to fold, decreasing the [pot odds](#) in the event of a straight or flush draw on the [flop](#). However, a hand like ace-king suited might do well to raise because the cards will also work well if they pair, which is the more likely possibility, so the pot odds are less important. The probability of drawing suited connectors is 3.92%, and the odds are 24.5:1.

Another definition of suited connectors includes any two suited cards which, together, can make a straight. Example: **2S 4S, QH 9H, 7D 9D**. Hands such as **2S 4S** are also known as one gap hands.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Value

In [poker](#), the strength of one's hand (that is, how likely it is to be the best according to the rules of the game being played) is often called its **value**, but discussions of [poker strategy](#) often use the term in a more specific sense to describe a type of bet: A bet "for value" is a bet made for the purpose of increasing the size of the pot, and which the player wants his

opponents to call. This is in contrast to a [bluff](#) or a [protection](#) bet (though some bets may have a combination of these motives).

Most of the time, this is because the player believes his hand is valuable in the first sense, and he therefore wants his opponents to put money into the pot that he expects to win from them at [showdown](#). In certain situations, though, even a [drawing](#) hand that is not currently the best can value bet: For example, on the next-to-last betting round of a [fixed limit](#) game, if a player surmises that he has a 1-in-4 chance of being dealt a final card that will give him a winning hand, and there are six opponents remaining, he can bet for value even though he will lose three out of four times, because the one time he does win he will win more than three times the amount bet (so the bet earns money in the long run). This is still a value bet, because it is made hoping the opponents will call and build a bigger pot in anticipation of winning (even though the win is only statistical).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker tournaments

A **poker tournament** is a tournament at which the winners are decided by playing [poker](#), usually a particular style of poker.

Contrast this to a [ring game](#), where the game is ongoing with no formal structure to determine a single winner in a certain length of time.

Entry fees and prizes

In a typical tournament, a player pays a fixed entry fee (called a *buy-in*) and receives, in return, a certain quantity of in-game currency, called *play money*, invariably represented in the form of [poker chips](#). Typically, the amount of play money given each player is an integer multiple of the buy-in. Only this in-game "play" money can be used in the game, real money cannot. Additionally, real and play money cannot be interchanged at any time. Some tournaments, however, offer the option of a *re-buy* or *buy-back*; this gives players the option of purchasing more chips. In some cases, re-buys are conditional (for example, offered only to players low on or out of chips) but in others they are unconditional, or offered to all players. When a player has no chips remaining (and has exhausted or declined all re-buy options, if any are available) he or she is eliminated from the tournament.

In most tournaments, the number of players at each table is kept even by moving players, either by switching one player or (as the field shrinks) taking an entire table out of play and distributing its players amongst the remaining tables. A few tournaments, called *shoot-outs*, do not do this; instead, the last player (sometimes the last two or more players) at a table moves on to a second or third round, akin to a single-elimination tournament found in other games.

The prizes for winning are usually derived from the entry fees, though outside funds may be entered as well. For example, some invitational tournaments do not have entry fees and fund their prize pools with sponsorship revenue and/or gate receipts from spectators. (These tournaments are referred to as freerolls.) Play continues, in most tournaments, until all but one player is eliminated, though in some tournament situations, especially informal ones, players have the option of ending by consensus.

Players are ranked in reverse chronological order — the last person in the game earns 1st place, the second-to-last earns 2nd, and so on. This ranking of players by elimination is unique amongst games, and also precludes the possibility of a tie for first place, since one player alone must have all the chips to end the tournament. (Ties are possible for all other places, though they are rare since the sole tiebreaker is the number of chips one has at the start of the hand in which one is eliminated.)

Sometimes tournaments end by mutual consensus of the remaining players. For example, in a ten-person, \$5 game, there may be two players remaining with \$29 and \$21, respectively, worth of chips. Rather than risk losing their winning, as one of them would if the game were continued, these two players may be allowed to split the prize proportional to their in-game currency (or however they agree).

Prizes are awarded to the winning players in one of three ways:

- *Fixed*: Each placing corresponds to a certain payoff. For example, a ten-person, \$20 buy-in tournament might award \$100 to the first-place player, \$60 for second-place, \$40 for third, and nothing for lower places.
- *Proportional*: Payouts are determined according to a percentage-based scale. The percentages are determined based upon the number of participants and will increase payout positions as participation increases. As a rule, roughly one player in ten will 'cash', or make a high enough place to earn money. These scales are very top-heavy, with the top three players usually winning more than the rest of the paid players combined.

Tournaments can be open or invitational. The [World Series of Poker](#), whose final event (a \$10,000 buy-in [no limit Texas Hold 'Em](#) tournament) is considered the most prestigious of all poker tournaments, is open.

Multi-table tournaments involve players playing simultaneously at dozens or even hundreds of tables. *Satellite tournaments* to high-profile, expensive poker tournaments are the means of entering a major event without posting a significant sum of cash. These have significantly smaller buy-ins, usually on the order of one-tenth to one-fiftieth the main tournament's buy-in, and can be held at various venues across the country and, more recently, on the Internet. Top players in this event, in lieu of a cash prize, are awarded seats to the main tourney, with the number of places dependent on participation. Chris Moneymaker, who won the 2003 World Series of Poker, was able to afford his seat at this event by winning an Internet tournament with a \$39 buy-in. Greg Raymer, 2004 World Series of Poker champion, acquired his seat via a \$165 Internet tournament.

Betting format

Betting, in tournaments, can take one of three forms:

- In a *structured* ([fixed limit](#)) betting system, bets and raises are restricted to specific amounts, though these amounts typically increase throughout the tournament. For example, for a [seven-card stud](#) tournament with the stakes at 10/20, raises would be \$10 in the first three rounds of betting, and \$20 in the latter rounds.
- *Semi-structured* betting provides ranges for allowed raises. Usually, in this format, one may not raise less than a previous player has raised. For example, if one player raises \$20, it would be illegal for another player to raise an additional \$5. [Pot limit](#) is a semi-structured format in which raises cannot exceed the current size of the pot.
- *Unstructured* betting, usually called [no limit](#). While blinds, antes, or bring-ins are fixed, players are free to bet as much as they wish, even early in a round of betting. To bet all of one's chips (risking one's tournament life, in the event of losing the hand) is to go *all-in*. In no-limit tournaments, players will sometimes take this risk even early in the betting; for example, in some no-limit Texas Hold 'Em tournaments, it is not uncommon for players to bet "all-in" before the flop.

The betting structure is one of the most defining elements of the game; even if other aspects are equivalent, a fixed-limit version and its no-limit counterpart are considered to

be very *different* games, because the strategies and play styles are very different. For instance, it is much easier to bluff in a no-limit game, which allows aggressive betting, than in a fixed-limit game. No-limit games also vary widely according to the proclivities of the players; an informal, emergent, betting structure is developed by the players' personal strategies and personalities.

The stakes of each round, as well as [blinds](#), bring-ins, and antes as appropriate per game, typically escalate according either to the time elapsed or the number of hands played.

Types of poker

While some tournaments offer a mix of games, like H.O.R.S.E. events which combine Hold'em, Omaha, Razz, Stud and Stud Eight or Better and Dealer's Choice events, at which one may choose from a similar menu of games, most tournaments feature one form of [stud](#) or [community card poker](#), such as [seven-card stud](#), seven card [high-low](#) stud, [Omaha Hold 'em](#) or [Texas Hold 'em](#). Both Omaha and Texas Hold'em tournaments are commonly offered in fixed-limit, [pot limit](#), and [no limit](#) forms.

Tournament venues

Informal tournaments can be organized by a group of friends; for example, most colleges feature poker tournaments. Casinos and online gaming sites often offer daily tournaments.

However, these are not the only venues. Poker cruises offer tournaments at sea. The 2005 World Series of Poker primarily took place in the conference hall of the Rio Hotel in Las Vegas.

Major tournaments

The two largest and most well-known tournaments are the World Poker Tour championship event and the [World Series of Poker](#), both held in Las Vegas, Nevada. The World Series has traditionally been featured on ESPN.

The 2005 World Series of Poker was the first held outside of Binion's Horseshoe Casino, though the final few days of the main event were held in the legendary Benny's Bullpen. Future tournaments will be held at one of the Harrah's Entertainment properties; 2005 saw the Rio as primary venue.

Arguably the most publicised European tournament is the Poker Million, which began in 2000 on Sky Sports, following on from the success of the Late Night Poker television show.

In addition to these events, there are other major tournaments throughout the year. The World Poker Tour broadcasts a series of open tournaments throughout the U.S. and Caribbean with buy-ins from \$5,000 to \$15,000, as well as a European event with a €10,000 buy-in. Some of these events are stand alone tournaments like the Caribbean Poker Adventure, but most are held in conjunction with a tournament series being held at

the host casino, like the Commerce Casino's LA Poker Classic, the Reno Hilton's World Poker Challenge and the Bicycle Casino's Legends of Poker.

Atlantic City hosts The United States Poker Championship at the Trump Taj Mahal casino. The Plaza casino in Las Vegas hosts the Ultimate Poker Challenge, a series of regular tournaments that culminates in a \$10,000 buy-in event.

[Home](#) | [Chip race](#) | [Hand-for-hand](#) | [Satellite tournament](#) | [Tournament director](#) | World Poker Tour | [World Series of Poker](#)

Chip race

A **chip race** is an event that takes place in [poker tournaments](#), especially those with an escalating blinds (such as [Texas hold 'em](#)), in which [chips](#) of denominations that are no longer needed (as the current and upcoming blinds are more easily played with larger chip values) are removed from play. This has the effect of reducing the number of physical chips in front of any player, and makes it easier for the players to count their stacks and their bets.

In a typical chip race:

1. All players *color up* their lesser-valued chips into greater denominations. For example, if the blinds have increased to a level where \$5 chips are no longer needed to post blinds, each five \$5 chips will be exchanged for a \$25 chip. Players will temporarily keep any leftover chips that cannot be fully colored up to larger chips (less than 5 \$5 chips in the above example).
2. All leftover chips are counted, and equivalent chips in the larger denomination are presented to the table. Continuing the example, if there are 15 \$5 chips remaining among 6 players, 3 \$25 chips are prepared. In the event the remaining smaller chips do not add up to a whole larger chip, an extra larger chip should be added as long as the leftover smaller chips total more than half a single larger chip.
3. Each player with leftover chips in the smaller denomination will receive one card for each chip. The cards are typically dealt face up, starting from the small blind position for the upcoming hand. Each player due to receive cards will receive all of his cards before the next player, rather than a "traditional" card deal; the player on the little blind, for example, who is due to receive three cards for his three chips, will receive all three of his cards before the big blind receives any.
4. The larger chips are issued to the players with the highest single cards showing (poker hands do not count). No player is issued more than one chip. Ties (cards of the same rank) are broken by suit, using the same bridge (ascending alphabetical) [order](#) of the suits: Spades are highest, followed by Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs. All remaining lesser-value chips are removed from play.

A chip race cannot eliminate a player from the game. In the event a player's last smaller-denomination chips are removed from play as part of the chip race, he automatically gets

one colored up chip if one is available. Any leftover colored up chips go to the winner(s) of the chip race as described above.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Hand-for-hand

Hand-for-hand situations in poker arise exclusively during [tournaments](#) at times in which multiple tables are in play and there must be a definitive player ranking.

In poker tournaments, the order of elimination is the means of determining player rank. Because rank directly amounts to a particular payout, at times during a tournament play is slowed down to ensure accurate measurement of player elimination. Hand-for-hand play requires all hands be dealt at the same time. When a table has finished a hand, the dealer must wait until all tables have finished to commence the next hand.

Note that this does not affect how a particular table 'plays' their hands; only the deals must be simultaneous.

Hand-for-hand play usually starts when the next player (or players) to leave the tournament will be the last place at a given payout. Most poker tournaments, for simplicity, group payouts based upon rank below the final table. Twentieth to eighteenth may be paid the same amount, and seventeenth through fourteenth may be paid a higher amount, for example. In this scenario, hand-for-hand will most likely commence with 21 and 18 players remaining. At the 2005 World Series of Poker Main Event, day 4 started in hand-for-hand, with eliminations required until 561 players remained.

Hand-for-hand play eliminates ties, except for one, exceptionally rare situation. If multiple players go all-in during one hand run hand-for-hand, assuming all players all-in are eliminated, the players are ranked according to chip count, the amount the player had in front of them at the beginning of the hand. Players are only awarded a tied rank if they have identical pre-hand chip counts, in which case the prizes are customarily split by both players. In some situations, pre-hand chip counts may not be available, in which case, all players eliminated on a given hand are considered to have tied for the same rank. For example, at the 2004 World Series of Poker Main Event, where 225 players were scheduled to be in-the-money, hand-for-hand play was held with 226 players. Two players were eliminated on the same hand, and were considered tied for 225th; they initially split the \$10,000 prize before the casino elected to give them each \$10,000.

Technically, the final table is also hand-for-hand, but as there is no other table to delay play, all hands are dealt once the previous hand has ended.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Satellite tournament

A **satellite tournament** is either a minor tournament or event on a competitive sporting tour or one of a group of such tournaments that form a series played in the same country or region. The term is most commonly used in reference to minor professional or competitive junior tennis.

In professional tennis, satellite tournaments are typically organised by a country's national tennis association and overseen by the International Tennis Federation. They are played by players who are ranked outside the top few hundred by the Association of Tennis Professionals with a high enough national ranking. Prize money ranges from £1000 - £15000 for winning the tournament. Players successful at this level of pro tennis move on to play ATP Challenger Series or even top-flight ATP Tour events.

Poker

A satellite tournament in [poker](#) is a qualifying event. Winners of these satellites usually win the [buy-in](#) fee to a larger, more prestigious tournament like the [World Series of Poker](#) Main Event.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Tournament director

In the game of [poker](#), the **tournament director** is the individual charged with running the [poker tournament](#). The job encompasses many roles, the most public of which is typically announcing the phrase "shuffle up and deal!" at the beginning of the day.

Additionally, tournament directors perform such other tasks as adjudicating disputes between dealers and players and also among the players themselves. Tournament directors are (generally) employees of the casino that the tournament is being hosted at, although this varies. For example, Matt Savage has appeared at various made-for-tv tournaments such as "King of Vegas", which do not take place at his place of employment.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

World Poker Tour

The **World Poker Tour (WPT)** is a series of [poker tournaments](#) featuring most of the world's professional players. It was started by attorney/television producer Stephen Lipscomb who now serves as CEO of WPT Enterprises (WPTE), the firm that controls the World Poker Tour.

The tour had its debut season in the latter part of 2002 and early part of 2003, climaxing with the WPT Championship in April 2003 at the Bellagio Casino in Las Vegas,

Nevada. The first season aired on the Travel Channel on American cable television in the spring of 2003. The show made its network debut on February 1, 2004 on NBC with a special "Battle Of Champions" tournament, which aired against CBS coverage of the Super Bowl XXXVIII pre-game show.

The World Poker Tour is a collection of [Texas hold 'em poker tournaments](#) held internationally, but mainly in the United States. The television show has led to a boom in the table game across American homes, local casinos and poker rooms, and online. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the key sponsors of the tour are casinos and online poker sites. The show, which is syndicated internationally, is co-hosted by World Series of Poker winner Mike Sexton, and actor Vince Van Patten. Former model Shana Hiatt served as the show host and sideline reporter in its first three seasons. Former newscaster Courtney Friel took over the host role for the fourth season, and Sabina Gadecki for the fifth.

While both Mike Sexton and Vince Van Patten give the impression that their commentary is "live" as events happen, most of the audio for the show is recorded in post-production, so the commentators can remark about the players' hole cards. This is due to the fact that many (but not all) of the WPT venues are prohibited by state regulations to allow camera feeds inside a gaming area. Consequently, the audio heard on the show broadcasts is a mix of audio recorded live, and audio commentary recorded in post-production.

First exemplified by the long-running [World Series of Poker](#) main event, a poker tournament gives each player an equal amount of [chips](#) to start, with colors representing different values. Play continues, typically over several days until one player has acquired all of the chips. When that occurs, that player has won the game and captures the grand prize, approximately 30-35% of the total prize pool. The resulting winner's check can exceed one million dollars. All other competitors finish with no chips, but win a portion of the prize pool according to the order in which they left the tournament. The last player to lose all of his chip-stack finishes in 2nd position, typically worth approximately 20% of the prize pool.

The drawing power of the WPT, like any poker tournament, is that anyone who can pay the "buy-in" (an amount ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000) or win a "satellite" tournament is able to compete against the top professional players, such as Phil Hellmuth, Doyle Brunson, or the top 2004 tournament money and multi-WPT tournament winner, Daniel Negreanu.

Fans of the show find it interesting due to technical innovations such as the ability to see the players' hole cards through a small camera in front of them on the [poker](#) table (an innovation first seen on the UK programme Late Night Poker). Due to the success of the show, special programs, such as the "Hollywood Home Game", featuring celebrities playing for charity, and "Ladies Night", where six of the top women played against each other, were developed.

In 2004 the World Poker Tour created a Walk of Fame, inducting poker legends Doyle Brunson and Gus Hansen as well as actor James Garner.

Now in its fourth season of broadcast, it still remains among the highest rated television programs on cable. It airs Wednesdays on the Travel Channel. The first three seasons of WPT are also available on NTSC DVD. (The second season DVD set features audio

commentary by several of the players. The third season is only available in a "Best Of" format, featuring just half of the episodes.)

A series of spin-off tournaments, titled the Professional Poker Tour, began filming in 2004. No episodes have as yet been broadcast, partly due to a dispute with the Travel Channel over rights. In the fall of 2005, WPTE announced that "a cable channel" (believed to be ESPN) had withdrawn from bidding for the PPT series, and that WPTE was negotiating with the Travel Channel to air the series. On January 30, 2006, WPTE and the Travel Channel announced that they had dismissed all open lawsuits and agreed to air as many as 44 new WPT and PPT events in 2006.

Player of the Year

Points are awarded for all Open events as follows:

- Winner: 1000 points
- Runner-up: 700 points
- 3rd place: 600 points
- 4th place: 500 points
- 5th place: 400 points
- 6th place: 300 points
- 7th place (TV bubble): 200 points

This award is given out to one player per season. The winners so far are:

- Season 1: Howard Lederer
- Season 2: Erick Lindgren
- Season 3: Daniel Negreanu
- Season 4: Gavin Smith

Results

World Poker Tour season 1 results

World Poker Tour season 2 results

World Poker Tour season 3 results

World Poker Tour season 4 results (contains spoilers)

World Poker Tour season 5 results (contains spoilers)

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

World Series of Poker

The **World Series of Poker** is the most prestigious set of [poker tournaments](#) in the world.

Origins

The original World Series of Poker was started by Tom Morehead of the Riverside casino in Reno and was an invitational event. The set of tournaments the World Series of Poker (WSOP) would evolve to was the brainchild of Las Vegas legend, casino owner, and poker player Benny Binion as well as his two sons Jack and Ted.

The Binion family not only nurtured the WSOP, but poker in general. Prior to the 1970s, poker was not found at many casinos because of the difficulty of keeping cheaters out. Through better security techniques as well as the Binion's tireless promotion through events like the WSOP, poker became a very popular game.

In 1970 the first WSOP at Binion's Horseshoe took place with seven players. The winner, Johnny Moss was elected by his peers as the first *World Champion of Poker* and received a silver cup as a prize.

Evolution

From 1971 on, all WSOP events have been tournaments with cash prizes. In 1973 a new event, [Five-card stud](#), was added to the main event of [no limit Texas Hold 'em](#). Since then new events have been added and removed. In 2006 there will be 42 events at the WSOP, covering the majority of [poker variants](#). Currently, [Texas Hold 'Em](#), [Omaha hold 'em](#) and [Seven-card stud](#) and their lowball variants (if any) are played. [H.O.R.S.E](#) has been played in the past and is returning in 2006. Also, S.H.O.E (Stud, Hold'em, Omaha and Eight or Better) has been played in the past along with [Chinese poker](#), Five card stud and many others. Event winners get, in addition to their prize money, a coveted gold bracelet.

Doyle "Texas Dolly" Brunson and Johnny "Oriental Express" Chan have each won ten bracelets, while Phil Hellmuth has nine. Doyle's son, Todd Brunson, won a bracelet in a [pot limit Omaha](#) event in 2005, making them the first and only father/son combo to win at least one event at the WSOP. Also, celebrities Patrick Bruel, Jan Sørensen and Jennifer Tilly have won WSOP bracelets in 1998, 2002 and 2005 respectively.

The number of participants in the WSOP has grown every year, and in recent years the growth has exploded. In 2000 there were 4,780 entrants in the various events, but in 2005, the number rose to over 23,000 players. In the main event alone, participants grew from 839 in 2003, to 2,576 in 2004, to 5,619 in 2005. For the 2006 main event there are accommodations for at least 9,000 players. Much of this growth can be attributed to the WSOP airing on ESPN and the World Poker Tour being shown on the Travel Channel, along with other televised series, as well as the boom of [online poker](#).

Like most tournaments, the sponsoring casino takes a "rake" (a percentage between 6%-10%, depending on the [buy-in](#)) and distributes the rest, hence the prize money increases with more players. In the 2005 main event \$52,818,610 (US) in prize money was

distributed, including a \$7.5 million first prize. Subtracting the \$10,000 buy-ins, over \$47 million was won by 560 players in the event.

Harrah's Takes The Pot

In 2004, Harrah's Entertainment purchased Binion's Horseshoe, renaming it just "Binion's" and announced that the 2005 Series events would be held at the Harrah's-owned Rio Hotel and Casino, located just off the Las Vegas Strip, with the final two days of the main event held downtown at Binion's in celebration of the centennial of the founding of Las Vegas. It also added a made-for-television \$2 million "freeroll" invitational "Tournament of Champions" (TOC) event won by Annie Duke as a "winner-take-all" event.

Starting in 2005, the WSOP began a tournament "circuit" at Harrah's-owned properties in the United States where in addition to the \$10,000 buy-in tournament at each site, qualifying players became eligible for a revamped Tournament of Champions. The 2005 TOC, made up of the top twenty qualifying players at each circuit event, along with the final table from the 2005 Main Event and the winners of nine or more bracelets (Hellmuth, Chan and Doyle Brunson) would participate in the revamped TOC at Caesar's Palace. Mike "The Mouth" Matusow won the first prize of \$1 million (US), and all the players at the final table were guaranteed a minimum of \$25,000 for the eighth and ninth place finishers. During a break in the final table of the 2005 Main Event on July 16, Harrah's announced that eleven properties — including the recently added Bally's and Caesar's properties — would host 2005-06 WSOP Circuit events that started on August 11 in Tunica, Mississippi. One event, that was scheduled for Biloxi, Mississippi was cancelled after the Grand Casino Biloxi, which was scheduled to host the event, suffered major damage from Hurricane Katrina.

The Rio will again host all 2006 WSOP major events, beginning on June 25 with satellite events and formally start the next day with the annual Casino Employee tournament, and will feature the TOC on June 28 and 29, 2006, along with the various events leading up to the main event, which will be held from July 28 until August 10. If the limit of 8,000 players buying in for \$10,000 each is reached, the first prize is estimated to be \$10 million as well as a special bracelet different from the others.

The Marketing of the *WSOP*

Like any event or sports league, the WSOP also has corporate sponsors and licensed products, which like any leagues or events, pay fees to market themselves as an official sponsor and/or licensee and exclusively use the WSOP insignia and cross-promote with their events. Besides the Harrah's properties and ESPN, major sponsors have included Miller Brewing's "Milwaukee's Best" brand of beers, Pepsi's SoBe Adrenaline Rush energy drink (sponsors of the 2005 TOC), Helene Curtis' Degree brand of anti-perspirant/deodorant, Card Player magazine, and GlaxoSmithKline/Bayer's Levitra erectile dysfunction medicine are all official corporate sponsors. Licensees include Activision (video games for different platforms such as Nintendo's GameCube, Microsoft's Xbox, Sony's PlayStation 2 and PC featuring computer generated versions of stars like Ferguson among others), and products made by different companies ranging from chip sets, playing

cards, hand held games and clothing like caps and shirts. The fees and licences bring in over a million dollars to Harrah's.

Film coverage of the WSOP

The earliest filming of the World Series was a special produced by Binion's Horseshoe in 1973 and narrated by Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder. CBS began covering the World Series in the late 1970s. In the early 1980s, the event was again filmed as specials. In the late 1980s, the World Series returned to television as ESPN took over broadcasting. Initially, coverage consisted of just a single one hour taped delay broadcast of the main event. ESPN Classic currently airs many of the old broadcasts, especially from the mid 1990s and beyond. The most striking thing about the early coverage is how little was actually shown, since no "pocket cam" existed. Generally, ESPN used poker playing actors such as Dick Van Patten, Vince Van Patten and Gabe Kaplan with either the [tournament director](#) (usually Jim Albrecht) or a poker pro like Phil Hellmuth joining the team. Early coverage was relatively primitive compared to what ESPN does now, with no pre-taped interviews or profiles on the players. The commentators were actually on the casino floor itself. The 2002 WSOP was the first with the "sneak peek" (later called the pocket cam). 2003 was the first year that the broadcast covered action preceeding the final table.

Since then, ESPN has greatly expanded its coverage to include many of the preliminary events of the WSOP, especially Texas Hold 'Em. Also, their coverage of the main event now typically includes at least one hour program on each day. Since 2005, ESPN has been broadcasting one hour programs of the "circuit" events that the WSOP has at various Harrah's-owned casinos. Additionally, ESPN's coverage now includes many of the trappings of sports coverage, such as lighter segments (called "The Nuts") and interviews.

In 2000 and 2001, the World Series of Poker was broadcast by The Discovery Channel. These hour long programs presented more of an overview or recap of the WSOP as opposed to broadcasting an actual live event with play-by-play analysis and color commentary. The Discovery Channel's broadcast also featured final table players interviews interlaced throughout the show. ESPN would resume coverage the following year.

ESPN's coverage in 2002 would be typical of their coverage in the 1990s (recorded in video, little or no post-production commentary or player profiles, no card cams). However, the final table broadcast was expanded over two one-hour episodes.

ESPN has expanded poker to all-new levels, especially with their coverage of the 2006 WSOP. It was announced that poker fans would be able to view the entire final table of the 2006 Main Event via pay-per-view. This would cost \$24.95 per order. Nonetheless, this is huge indicator of the popularity "boom" of poker in the United States.

WSOP broadcasters

1973 (special) - Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder
 1978 (CBS) - Brent Musburger and Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder
 1979 (CBS) - Frank Glieber and Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder

1981 (special) - Curt Gowdy
1983 (special) - Curt Gowdy and Bobby Baldwin
1987 (special) - Ted Robinson
1988 (ESPN) - Chris Marlowe
1989 (ESPN) - Chris Marlowe
1990 (ESPN) - Chris Marlowe
1991 (ESPN) - Chris Marlowe
1993 (ESPN) - Dick Van Patten and Jim Albrecht
1994 (ESPN) - Dick Van Patten and Jim Albrecht
1995 (ESPN) - Dick Van Patten and Jim Albrecht
1997 (ESPN) - Gabe Kaplan and Jim Albrecht
1998 (ESPN) - Vince Van Patten and Jim Albrecht
2002 (ESPN) - Lon McEachern and Gabe Kaplan
2003 (ESPN) - Lon McEachern and Norman Chad
2004 (ESPN) - Lon McEachern and Norman Chad
2005 (ESPN) - Lon McEachern and Norman Chad

The main event

The main event of the WSOP is the \$10,000 buy-in no-limit Texas Hold 'Em tournament since 1972. (In 1971, the buy-in was \$5,000.) Winners of the event not only get the largest prize of the tournament and a gold bracelet, but additionally their picture is placed into the *Gallery of Champions* at Binion's.

There have been many memorable moments during the main events, including Jack Straus's 1982 comeback win after discovering he had one \$500 chip left when he thought he was out of the tournament.

Four players have won the main event multiple times: Johnny Moss (1970, 1971 and 1974), Doyle Brunson (1976 and 1977), Stu Ungar (1980, 1981 and 1997) and Johnny Chan (1987 and 1988.)

The end of the 1988 main event was featured in the movie Rounders.

Chris Moneymaker and Greg Raymer, the winners in 2003 and 2004 both qualified for the main event through satellite tournaments at the PokerStars online cardroom.

Several living poker legends have tried unsuccessfully for years to win the main event, including T. J. Cloutier, the 1985 and 2000 runner-up.

As of 2006, a cap of 8,000 players is now an official stipulation of the Main Event. With the exception of winners of the World Series Of Poker Main Event [satellite tournaments](#) (who automatically win a spot in the main event), all remaining players (including former champions, celebrities, and professional poker players) must supply the \$10,000 [buy-in](#), in order to participate.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker jargon

The large and growing **jargon of [poker](#)** includes many terms. This page contains brief definitions of the most common terms you may encounter in text or at play. The list has been trimmed to primarily those poker-specific terms one might find in poker texts or in common use in casinos. Some terms link to a more complete article on the topic.

Various [poker hands](#) have been given many names, and these are listed in [List of slang names for poker hands](#). Finally, this is not meant to be a formal dictionary; precise usage details and multiple closely related senses are omitted here in favor of concise treatment of the basics.

Contents: Top - 0-9 A [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

A

A-B-C, A-B-C-D

1. A sequence of the lowest cards in a [lowball](#) game. For example, the hand 8-6-3-2-A might be called *an eight-six-a-b-c*.
2. Uncreative or predictable play. *He's an a-b-c player*.

ace-to-five, ace-to-six

Methods of evaluating low hands. See ace-to-five low, ace-to-six low.

act

To make a play (bet, call, raise, or fold) at the required time. *It is Ted's turn to act*. Compare to "in turn".

action

1. A player's turn to act. *The action is on you*.
2. A willingness to gamble. *I'll give you action* or *There's plenty of action in this game*
3. A bet, along with all the calls of that bet. For example, if one player makes a \$5 bet and three other players call, he is said to have \$5 "in action", and to have received \$15 worth of action on his bet. Usually this term comes into play when figuring side pots when one or more players is all in.

action button

A marker similar to a kill button, on which a player places an extra forced bet. In a seven-card stud high-low game, the action button is awarded to the winner of a [scoop](#) pot above a certain size, signifying that in the next pot, they player will be required to post an amount representing a completion of the bring-in to a full bet. For example, in a stud game with \$2 and \$4 betting limits and a \$1 bring-in, a player with the action button must post \$2; after the cards are dealt, the player with the low card must still pay the \$1 bring-in, then when the betting reaches the player who posted the \$2, he is

required to leave it in as a raise of the bring-in (and has the option to raise further). Players in between the bring-in and the action button can just call the bring-in, but they know ahead of time that they will be raised by the action button.

action only

In many cardrooms, with respect to an all-in bet, only a full (or half) bet can be reraised. Anything less than a full (or half) bet is considered to be *action only*, that is, other players can call the bet but not raise it. For example, Alice bets \$100. Bob calls. Carol goes all in for \$119. When the action returns to Alice and Bob, they may only to call the extra \$19; they cannot raise it. Carol's raise is called *action only*. Compare to "[full bet rule](#)", "[half bet rule](#)".

add-on

In a live game, to buy more chips before you have busted. In [tournament](#) play, a single rebuy for which all players are eligible regardless of their stack size. This is usually allowed only once, at the end of the rebuy period.

advertising

To make an obvious play or expose cards in such a way as to deliberately convey an impression to your opponents about your style of play. For example, to make a bad play or bluff to give the impression that you bluff frequently (hoping opponents will then call your legitimate bets) or to show only good hands to give the impression that you rarely bluff (hoping opponents will then fold when you do).

aggressive or aggression

See [aggression \(poker\)](#). Compare to "[loose](#)", "[tight](#)", "[passive](#)".

air

In a [lowball](#) game, "giving air" is letting an opponent who might otherwise fold know that you intend to draw one or more cards to induce him to call.

all day

The total current posted bet. Used to indicate that the speaker is referring to the *total* bet, versus the *difference* the acting player would need to post. *Action is on Alice; twenty all day*. Also "[altogether](#)" or "straight".

all in

See all in.

altogether

The total current posted bet. Used to indicate that the speaker is referring to the *total* bet, versus the *difference* the acting player would need to post. *Action is on Alice; twenty dollars altogether*. Also "[all day](#)" or "straight".

ammo, ammunition

Chips in play. *I'm going to need more ammo for this game*. Compare to "[fire](#)".

angle

A technically legal, but borderline unethical, play. For example, deliberately miscalling one's own hand to induce a fold, or placing odd amounts of chips in the pot to confuse

opponents about whether you mean to call or raise. A player employing such tactics is called an "angle shooter".

ante

See ante.

ante off

In [tournament](#) play, to force an absent player to continue paying antes, blinds, bring-ins, or other forced bets so that the contest remains fair to the other players. *Go ahead and take that phone call. We'll ante you off until you get back.* Also "[blind off](#)".

B

baby

A low-ranked card, usually used in [lowball](#) games. Also "spoke" when between ace and five.

backdoor

1. A draw requiring two or more rounds to fill. For example, catching two consecutive cards in two rounds of [seven-card stud](#) or [Texas hold 'em](#) to fill a straight or flush.
2. A hand made other than the hand the player intended to make. *I started with four hearts hoping for a flush, but I backdoored two more kings and my [trips](#) won.*

back in

1. To enter a pot by checking and then calling someone else's open on the first betting round. Usually used in games like [jackpots](#), meaning to enter without openers.
2. To enter a pot cheaply or for free because of having posted a [blind](#).

back into

To win a pot with a hand that would have folded to any bet. For example, two players enter a pot of draw poker, both drawing to flushes. Both miss, and check after the draw. The player with the ace-high draw "backs into" winning the pot against the player with only a king-high draw. Also to make a backdoor draw, for example, a player who starts a hand with three of a kind, but makes a runner-runner flush, can be said to back into the flush.

bad beat

See [bad beat](#).

bank

Also called the house, the person responsible for distributing chips, keeping track of the buy-ins, and paying winners at the end of the game.

bankroll

The amount of money that a player has to wager for the duration of his or her poker career.

behind

1. Not currently having the best hand. *I'm pretty sure my pair of jacks was behind Lou's kings, but I had other draws, so I kept playing.*
2. Describing money in play but not visible as chips in front a player. For example, a player may announce "I've got \$100 behind" while handing money to a casino employee, meaning that he intends those chips to be in play as soon as they are brought to him.

belly buster

An inside straight draw. Also "[gutshot](#)".

berry patch

A game with many unskilled or "live" players; a lucrative opportunity for profit.

bet

1. Any money wagered during the play of a hand.
2. More specifically, the opening bet of a betting round.
3. In a fixed limit game, the standard betting amount. *There were six bets in the pot when I called.*

betting structure

See [betting \(poker\)](#).

big bet

See [big bet](#).

big bet game

A game played with a no limit or pot limit betting structure.

big blind

See [blind \(poker\)](#).

big blind special

A situation in which (assuming no raising) the player in the big blind is dealt weak hole cards, but ends up making the best hand because he or she was able to see the flop for free, often two pair with unusual cards such as 3-9 or 10-2. Compare to "[small blind special](#)".

blank

A card, frequently a [community card](#), of no apparent value. *I suspected Margaret had a good draw, but the river card was a blank, so I bet again.* Also "[rag](#)". Compare to "[brick](#)", "[bomb](#)".

blaze

A hand of five face cards that used to outrank a flush.

bleed

To lose small amounts continually, so as to add up to a large loss. *I won that large pot with my kings, but then I bled it all off over the next hour.*

blind

1. A type of forced bet. See [blind \(poker\)](#).
2. In the "[dark](#)".

blind stud

A [stud poker](#) game in which all cards are dealt face down. Was popular in California before legal rulings made traditional stud legal there.

blind off, blinded

1. To "[ante off](#)".
2. To have one's stack reduced by paying ever increasing blinds in tournaments.
Ted had to make a move soon or he would be blinded away in three more rounds.

bluff

See [bluff \(poker\)](#).

bluff-catcher

On the last betting round, a hand that cannot win if the opponent is making a legitimate [value](#) bet, but that might win if the opponent's bet was a pure bluff. *It looked like Jim and I were both drawing for a flush. I missed and he bet, but I figured the pair of nines I caught along the way made a bluff-catcher, so I called.*

board

1. The set of [community cards](#) in a [community card game](#). *If another spade hits the board, I'll have to fold.*
2. The set of face-up cards of a particular player in a [stud](#) game. *Zack's board didn't look too scary, so I bet into him again.*
3. The set of all face-up cards in a stud game. *I started with a flush draw, but there were already four other diamonds showing on the board, so I folded.*

bomb

A "[brick](#)". Compare to "[blank](#)", "[rags](#)".

bone

A chip, often of small denomination.

both ways

Both halves of a [split pot](#), often declared by a player who thinks he or she will win both low and high.

bottom end

The lowest of several possible straights, especially in a [community card game](#). For example, in [Texas hold'em](#) with the cards 5-6-7 on the board, a player holding 3-4 has the bottom end straight, while a player holding 4-8 or 8-9 has a higher straight. Also "[idiot end](#)".

bottom pair, bottom set

In a [community card game](#), a pair (or set) made by matching the lowest-ranking board card with one (or two) in one's private hand.

box

The chip tray in front of a house dealer, and by extension, the house dealer's position at the table. *You've been in the box for an hour now; don't you get a break?*

boxed card

A card encountered face-up in the assembled deck during the deal, as opposed to one overturned in the act of dealing. Most house rules treat a boxed card as if it didn't exist; that is, it is placed aside and not used. Different rules cover cards exposed during the deal.

break

1. In a [draw poker](#) game, to discard cards that make a [made hand](#) in the hope of making a much better one. For example, a player with J-J-10-9-8 may wish to break his pair of jacks to draw for the straight, and a [lowball](#) player may break his 9-high 9-5-4-2-A to draw for the wheel.
2. To end a session of play. *The game broke at about 3:00.*

brick

A "[blank](#)", though more often used in the derogatory sense of a card that is undesirable rather than merely inconsequential, such as a card of high rank or one that makes a pair in a low-hand game. Also "[bomb](#)". Compare to "[rags](#)".

bring in

1. To open a betting round. *Alice brought it in for \$5, and Bob raised \$10.*
2. A kind of forced bet. *Ted posted the bring-in.*

brush

1. A casino employee whose job it is to greet players entering the poker room, maintain the list of persons waiting to play, announce open seats, and various other duties (including brushing off tables to prepare them for new games, hence the name).
2. To recruit players into a game. *Dave is brushing up some players for tonight's game.*

bubble

The last finishing position in a [poker tournament](#) before entering the payout structure. *He was very frustrated after getting eliminated on the bubble.* Also can be applied to other situations like if six players will make a televised final table the player finishing seventh will go out on the "TV bubble".

buck

See [button \(poker\)](#).

bug

See [bug \(poker\)](#). Compare to [wild card \(poker\)](#).

bullet

1. An ace.
2. A chip. Also "[ammo](#)".

bully

To bluff repeatedly at all opportunities, or a player who does so. Compare to "run over".

bum deal

A mis-deal

bump

To raise. *Alice bet \$5 and Bob bumped it to \$20.*

burn, burn card

See [burn card](#).

busted

1. Not complete, such as four cards to a straight that never gets the fifth card to complete it.
2. Out of chips. To "bust out" is to lose all of one's chips.

button

See [button \(poker\)](#). Also "buck".

buy-in

The minimum required amount of chips to become involved in a game (or tournament). For example, a \$4-\$8 fixed limit game might require a player to buy at least \$40 worth of chips to play. This is typically far less than an average player would expect to play with for any amount of time, but large enough that the player can play a number of hands without buying more, so the game isn't slowed down by constant chip-buying.

buy short

To buy into a game for an amount smaller than the normal buy-in. Some casinos allow this under certain circumstances, such as after having lost a full buy-in, or if all players agree to allow it.

buy the button

A rule originating in northern California casinos in games played with [blinds](#), in which a new player sitting down with the [button](#) to his right (who would normally be required to sit out a hand as the button passed him, then post to come in) may choose to pay the amount of both blinds for this one hand (the amount of the large blind playing as a [live blind](#), and the amount of the small blind as [dead money](#)), play this hand, and then

receive the button on the next hand as if he had been playing all along. See [public cardroom rules \(poker\)](#).

buy the pot

Making a bet when no one else is betting so as to force the other players to fold in order to win the pot uncontested.

C

call

See call.

calling station

A weak player who frequently checks and calls, but rarely raises.

cap

A limit on the number of raises allowed in a betting round. Typically three or four (in addition the [opening](#) bet). In most casinos, the cap is removed if there are only two players remaining either (1) at the beginning of the betting round, or (2) at the time that what would have otherwise been the last raise is made.

Also, term for the chip, token, or object placed atop one's cards to show continued involvement with a hand.

cards speak

See [cards speak \(poker\)](#).

case card

The last available card of a certain description (typically a rank). *The only way I can win is to catch the case king.*, meaning the only king remaining in the deck.

cash plays

An announcement, usually by a dealer, that a player requested to buy chips and can bet the cash he has on the table in lieu of chips until he receives his chips.

catch

To receive needed cards on a [draw](#). *I'm down 300--I can't catch anything today.* or *Joe caught his flush early, but I caught the boat on seventh street to beat him.* Often used with an adjective to further specify, for example "catch perfect", "catch inside", "catch smooth".

catch up

To successfully complete a [draw](#), thus defeating a player who previously had a better hand. *I was sure I had Alice beat, but she caught up when that spade fell.*

catch perfect

To catch the only two possible cards that will complete a hand and win the pot, usually those leading to a straight flush. Usually used in [Texas Hold 'Em](#). Compare with "[runner-runner](#)".

center pot

The main pot in a [table stakes](#) game where one or more players are all in.

chase

1. To call a bet to see the next card when holding a [drawing hand](#) when the [pot odds](#) do not merit it.
2. To continue to play a [drawing](#) hand over multiple betting rounds, especially one unlikely to succeed. *Bob knew I made three nines on fourth street, but he chased that flush draw all the way to the river.*
3. To continue playing with a hand that is not likely the best because one has already invested money in the pot.

check

1. To bet nothing. See check.
2. A casino chip.

check out

To fold, in turn, even though there is no bet facing the player. In some games this is considered a breach of etiquette equivalent to folding out of turn. In others it is permitted, but frowned upon.

check-raise

See [check-raise](#).

cheese

A poor hand. *Throw that piece of cheese in the muck and move on to the next hand.*

chip

See [poker chip](#).

chip along

To bet or call the minimum required to stay in, often done with little or no thought.

chip declare

A method of declaring intent to play high or low in a split-pot game with declaration. See [declaration](#).

chip dumping

A form of collusion that happens during tournaments, especially in the early rounds. Two or more players decide to go all-in early. The winner gets a large amount of chips, which increases the player's chance of cashing. The winnings are then split among the colluders.

chip race

See [chip race](#).

chip up

To exchange lower-denomination chips for higher-denomination chips. In [tournament](#) play, the term means to remove all the small chips from play by rounding up any odd small chips to the nearest large denomination, rather than using a chip race.

chop

1. To split a pot because of a tie, split-pot game, or player agreement.
2. To play a game for a short time and cash out. Also "hit and run".
3. A request made by a player to a dealer after taking a large-denomination chip that he wishes the dealer to make change.
4. To chop blinds.

chopping the blinds

See [chopping the blinds](#).

closed

See [closed \(poker\)](#).

coffeehouse

To make annoying smalltalk during a game, to make comments about a hand in progress, or to make deceptive comments about one's own play.

cold

1. Consecutive. *I caught three cold spades for the flush.*
2. Unlucky. *I've been cold all week.*

cold call

To call an amount that represents a sum of bets or raises by more than one player. *Alice opened for \$10, Bob raised another \$20, and Carol cold called the \$30.* Compare to "[smooth call](#)", "[flat call](#)", "[overcall](#)".

cold deck

A deck previously arranged to produce a specific outcome, then surreptitiously switched into the game. Called "cold" because such a deck switched in during play will not have been warmed by the dealer's hands. *I can't believe David got those four kings the same time I got four sixes--it was like being cold-decked.* Also "ice".

collusion

A form of cheating involving cooperation among two or more players. See [cheating in poker](#).

color change, color up

To exchange small-denomination chips for larger ones.

combo, combination game

A casino table at which multiple forms of poker are played in rotation.

come bet, on the come

A bet or raise made with a [drawing](#) hand, building the pot in anticipation of filling the draw. Usually a weak "gambler's" play, but occasionally correct with a very good draw and large pot or as a semi-bluff.

community card

See [community card poker](#).

completion

To raise a small bet up to the amount of what would be a normal-sized bet. For example, in a \$2/\$4 stud game with \$1 [bring-in](#), a player after the bring-in may raise it to \$2, completing what would otherwise be a sub-minimum bet up to the normal minimum. Also in limit games, if one player raises all in for less than the normally required minimum, a later player might complete the raise to the normal minimum (depending on house rules). See [table stakes](#).

connectors

Two or more cards of consecutive rank.

continuation bet

A bet made after the flop by the player who took the lead in betting before the flop (Hold 'em and Omaha). Compare to "[probe bet](#)".

countdown

1. Especially in [lowball](#), two hands very nearly tied that must be compared in detail to determine a winner, for example, 8-6-5-3-2 versus 8-6-5-3-A.
2. The act of counting the cards that remain in the stub after all cards have been dealt, done by a dealer to ensure that a complete deck is being used.

counterfeit

See [counterfeit \(poker\)](#). Also "[duplicate](#)".

cow

A player with whom one is sharing a buy-in, with the intent to split the result after play. To "go cow" is to make such an arrangement.

crack

To beat a better hand, mostly heard in reference to the best Hold em hole cards, AA. eg "My aces were cracked again"

crossfire

When a player is caught in the middle between two raisers and is induced to call each bet because of the [pot odds](#). Compare to "[whipsaw](#)".

crying call

A call made reluctantly on the last betting round with the expectation of losing (but with some remote hope of catching a bluff).

cut

See cut.

cutoff

The seat immediately to the right of the dealer button. Also "pone".

D

dark

Describing an action taken before receiving information to which the player would normally be entitled. *I'm drawing three, and I check in the dark.* Compare to "blind".

dead blind

A [blind](#) that is not "live", in that the player posting it does not have the option to raise if other players just call. Usually refers to a small blind posted by a player entering, or returning to, a game (in a position other than the big blind) that is posted in addition to a live blind equal to the big blind.

dead button

See dead button rule.

dead hand

A player's hand that is not entitled to participate in the deal for some reason, such as having been fouled by touching another player's cards, being found to contain the wrong number of cards, being dealt to a player who did not make the appropriate forced bets, etc.

dead money

See [dead money \(poker\)](#).

deadwood

The muck.

deal

1. To distribute cards to players in accordance with the rules of the game being played.
2. A single instance of a game of poker, begun by shuffling the cards and ending with the award of a pot. Also called a "hand" (though both terms are ambiguous).
3. An agreement to split [tournament](#) prize money differently from the announced payouts.

deal twice

In a cash game, when two players are involved in a large pot and one is all-in, they might agree to deal the remaining cards twice. If one player wins both times he wins the whole pot, but if both players win one hand they split the pot.

dealer

1. The person dealing the cards. **Give Alice the cards, she's dealing.**
2. The person who assumes that role for the purposes of betting order in a game, even though someone else might be physically dealing. Also "button". Compare to "buck".

dealer's choice

A version of poker in which the deal passes each game and each dealer can choose, or invent, a new poker game each hand.

declare

To verbally indicate an action or intention. See [declaration \(poker\)](#).

decloak

To raise after having [slow playing](#) for a time (making it clear that you were, in fact, slow playing). See "[in the bushes](#)".

deep

Describing a large amount of money, either in play or having been lost. *How deep are you?* (meaning "How much money do you have", in anticipation of making a very large bet). *I won that large pot, but I'm in much deeper than that.*

defense

See [defense \(poker\)](#).

deuce

1. A 2-spot card.
2. Any of various related uses of the number two, such as a \$2 limit game, a \$2 chip, etc.

deuce-to-seven

A method of evaluating low hands. See [Deuce-to-seven low](#).

discard

To take a previously dealt card out of play. The set of all discards for a deal is called the "muck" or the "deadwood".

dog

Underdog; that is, a player with a smaller chance to win than another specified player. Frequently used when the exact odds are expressed. *Harry might have been bluffing, but if he really had the king, my hand was a 4-to-1 dog, so I folded.*

dominated hand

A hand that is extremely unlikely to win against another specific hand, even though it may not be a poor hand in its own right. Most commonly used in [Texas hold 'em](#). A hand like A-Q, for example, is a good hand in general but is dominated by A-K, because whenever the former makes a good hand, the latter is likely to make a better one. A hand like 7-8 is a poor hand in general, but is not dominated by A-K because it makes different kinds of hands. See [Dominating hand](#).

donation

A [call](#) made by a player who fully expects to lose; made either out of boredom or irrational optimism.

donk, donkey

Epithet for an inexperienced, unskilled, or foolish poker player. *I played that hand like a donkey*. Also "[fish](#)".

donk (verb)

To play a hand poorly. *I donked off 15 bucks on that last hand*.

door card

In a [stud](#) game, a player's first face-up card. *Patty paired her door card on fifth street and raised, so I put her on [trips](#)*.

double-ace flush

Under [unconventional rules](#), a flush with one or more [wild cards](#) in which they play as aces, even if an ace is already present.

double-board, double-flop

Any of several [community card game](#) variants (usually [Texas hold 'em](#)) in which two separate boards of community cards are dealt simultaneously, with the pot split between the winning hands using each board.

double-draw

Any of several [Draw poker](#) games in which the draw phase and subsequent betting round are repeated twice.

double belly buster, double gut-shot, double inside straight

See double inside straight draw.

double through, double up

In a big bet game, to bet all of one's chips on one hand against a single opponent (who has an equal or larger stack) and win, thereby doubling your stack. *I was losing a bit, but then I doubled through Sarah to put me in good shape*.

downcard

A card that is dealt facedown.

down to the felt

All in, or having lost all of one's money. Refers to the green felt surface of a poker table no longer obscured by chips.

drag light

To pull chips away from the pot to indicate that you don't have enough money to cover the bet. If you win, the amount is ignored. If you lose, you must cover the amount from your pocket.

draw, drawing hand

See [draw \(poker\)](#).

drawing dead

Playing a [drawing](#) hand that will lose even if successful (a state of affairs usually only discovered after the fact or in a tournament when two or more players are "all in" and they show their cards). *I caught the jack to make my straight, but Rob had a full house all along, so I was drawing dead.*

drawing live

Not drawing dead; that is, [drawing](#) to a hand that will win if successful.

drawing thin

Not drawing completely dead, but [chasing](#) a draw in the face of poor odds. Example: a player who will only win by catching 1 or 2 specific cards is said to be drawing thin.

drop

1. To fold.
2. Money charged by the casino for providing its services, often dropped through a slot in the table into a strong box. See "rake".
3. To drop ones cards to the felt to indicate that one is in or out of a game.

dry pot

A side pot with no money. Created when a player goes all in and is called by more than one opponent, but not raised. Bluffing into a dry pot is a play that cannot possibly earn a profit, so doing so is considered foolish. It may also be unethical, because it serves to protect the all-in player at the expense of the bettor and the other players, and so is a form of collusion.

dump, dumped

To lose a large quantity of ones stack to another player on a particular hand or set of hands in short succession. *I dumped half my stack to John after he cracked my Kings.*

duplicate

To [counterfeit](#), especially when the counterfeiting card matches one already present in the one's hand.

E

early position

See [position \(poker\)](#).

equity

One's mathematical expected value from the current deal, calculated by multiplying the amount of money in the pot by one's probability of winning. For example, if the pot currently contains \$100, and you estimate that you have a one in four chance of winning it, then your equity in the pot is \$25.

expectation, expected value, EV

See expected value. Often used in poker to mean "profitability in the long run".

exposed card

A card whose face has been deliberately or accidentally revealed to players normally not entitled to that information during the play of the game. Various games have different rules about how to handle this irregularity. Compare to "[boxed card](#)".

F

family pot

A deal in which every (or almost every) seated player called the first opening bet.

fast

[Aggressive](#) play. *I was afraid of too many chasers, so I played my trips fast.* Compare to "[speeding](#)".

feeder

In a casino setting, a second or third table playing the same game as a "main" table, and from which players move to the main game as players there leave. Also called a "must-move table."

fence-hopper

Compare to "hop the fence".

fifth street

1. The last card dealt to the board in community card games. Also "[river](#)".
2. The fifth card dealt to each player in stud poker.

fill, fill up

To successfully draw to a hand that needs one card to complete it, by getting the last card of a straight, flush, or full house. *Jerry made his flush when I was betting my kings up, but I filled on seventh street to catch up.*

final table

In a multi-table tournament: to remain in the game long enough as to make it to the last round of players that can fit at one standard tournament table (usually 9 or 10 players).

fire

To make the opening bet of a round, following the same analogy by which chips are called "[ammo](#)". *I called Ken's bet on fourth with a draw, but I bricked, and when he fired again I had to fold. or I think Randy suspected my earlier bet was a bluff, but when I fired a second shot he let it go.*

fish

1. An unskilled player, or an otherwise skilled player playing carelessly. Also "[donkey](#)".
2. To risk money on a long-shot bet

five of a kind

A hand possible only in games with [wild cards](#), defeating all other hands, comprising five cards of equal rank.

fixed limit, flat limit

See fixed limits.

flash

1. To show the bottom card of the deck while shuffling.
2. To show one or more downcards from one's hand. *After everyone folded, Ted flashed his bluff to the other players.*

flat call

A call, in a situation where one might be expected to raise. *Normally I raise with jacks, but with three limpers ahead of me I decided to flat call.* Also "[smooth call](#)". Compare to "[cold call](#)", "[overcall](#)". See [slow play \(poker\)](#).

float

To call a bet with an inferior hand, with the intention of bluffing on a later betting round.

floorman, floorperson

A casino employee whose duties include adjudicating player disputes, keeping games filled and balanced, and managing dealers and other personnel. Players may shout "floor!" to call for a floorperson to resolve a dispute, to ask for a table or seat change, or to ask for some other casino service.

flop

See [flop \(poker\)](#)

flop game

A [community card game](#).

flush

A hand comprising five cards of the same suit. See [rank of hands \(poker\)](#).

fold

See fold.

forced bet

See [forced bets](#).

forced-move

In a casino where more than one table is playing the same game with the same betting structure, one of the tables may be designated the "main" table, and will be kept full by requiring a player to move from one of the feeder tables to fill any vacancies. Players will generally be informed that their table is a "forced-move" table to be used in this way before they agree to play there. Also "must-move".

forward motion

A house rule of some casinos states that if a player in turn picks up chips from his stack and moves his hand toward the pot ("forward motion with chips in hand"), this constitutes a commitment to bet (or call), and the player may not withdraw his hand to check or fold. Such a player still has the choice of whether to call or raise. Compare to "[string bet](#)".

fouled hand

A hand that is ruled unplayable because of an irregularity, such as being found with too many or too few cards, having been mixed with cards of other players or the muck, having fallen off the table, etc. Compare to "[dead hand](#)".

four-flush

Four cards of the same suit. A [non-standard poker hand](#) in some games, an incomplete [drawing](#) hand in most.

four of a kind

A hand containing four cards of equal rank. Also "quads". See [rank of hands \(poker\)](#).

four-straight

Four cards in rank sequence; either an open-ender or one-ender. A [non-standard poker hand](#) in some games, an incomplete drawing hand in most. Sometimes "four to a straight".

fourth street

1. The fourth card dealt to the board in community card games. Also "turn".
2. The fourth card dealt to each player in stud.

fox hunt

See [rabbit hunt](#).

free card

A card dealt to one's hand (or to the board of [community cards](#)) after a betting round in which no player opened. One is thereby being given a chance to improve one's hand without having to pay anything. *I wasn't sure my hand was good, but I bet so I wouldn't give a free card to Bill's flush draw.*

freeroll

See freeroll (poker).

freezeout

A winner-take-all [tournament](#). That is, a game in which play continues until one player has all the chips.

full, full boat, full hand, full house

A hand with three cards of one rank and two of a second rank. Also "boat", "tight". See [rank of hands \(poker\)](#).

full bet rule

In some casinos, the rule that a player must wager the full amount required in order for his action to constitute a raise. For example, in a game with a \$4 fixed limit, a player facing an opening bet of \$4 who wagers \$7 is deemed to have flat called, because \$8 is required to raise. Compare to "[half bet rule](#)". See [Public cardroom rules \(poker\)](#) and "All in" betting.

G

garbage

1. The "[muck](#)".
2. A worthless hand.

going south

To sneak a portion of your chips from the table while the game is underway. Normally prohibited in public card rooms. Also "[ratholing](#)".

grinder

A player who earns a living by making small profits over a long period of consistent, conservative play. Compare to "rock".

guts, guts to open

1. A game with no opening hand requirement; that is, where the only requirement to open the betting is "guts", or courage.
2. Any of several poker variants where pots accumulate over several hands until a single player wins. See guts.

gutshot

An inside straight draw. *Ted has a gutshot draw.* Also "[belly buster](#)".

gypsy

To enter the pot cheaply by just calling the blind rather than raising. Also "[limp](#)".

H

half bet rule

In some casinos, the rule that placing chips equal to or greater than half the normal bet amount beyond the amount required to call constitutes a commitment to [raise](#) the normal amount. For example, in a game with a \$4 fixed limit, a player facing a \$4 [opening](#) bet who places \$6 in the pot is deemed to have raised, and must complete his bet to \$8. Compare to "[full bet rule](#)". See [Public cardroom rules \(poker\)](#) and "all in" betting.

hammer

1. To bet and raise aggressively. *Nora kept hammering, so I folded.*
2. "Having the hammer" is being in last position, especially head up. *You've got the hammer; I check to you.*
3. A "hammer lock" refers to a player with an almost 100% chance of winning the pot.
4. In [Texas Hold'em](#), [The Hammer](#) refers to a starting hand consisting of a **7-2 offsuit**.

hand

See [hand \(poker\)](#).

hand-for-hand

See [hand-for-hand](#).

hard

1. Aggressive and uncompromising, said of one's play. *Jim played me hard all night; I could never get a break.*
2. Chips, as opposed to paper money. *I gave the floorman \$100 for \$50 hard and \$50 soft.*

head up, heads up

Playing against a single opponent. *After Lori folded, Frank and I were heads up for the rest of the hand.*

here kitty kitty

A conspicuously small bet made with a very powerful hand in the hope of getting a call from one or more opponents who would otherwise fold to a normal-sized bet.

high, high hand

The best hand using traditional [poker hand](#) values, as opposed to [lowball](#). Used especially in high-low split games.

high card

1. A [no pair](#) hand, ranked according to its highest-ranking cards.
2. To defeat another player by virtue of high-ranking cards, especially kickers.
3. To randomly select a player for some purpose by having each draw one card, the highest of which is selected (for example, to decide who deals first). *When all the players get here, we'll high card for the button.* Often [high card by suit](#) is used for this purpose.

high-low, high-low split

See [high-low split](#).

high society

1. Large-denomination chips. Also "society".

hit and run

To play for a short time, make money, and leave. Also called "chopping" a game.

hog, hogger

To win all of the pot in a split-pot game, for example, by having both the best high hand and best low hand simultaneously. Also called "scooping" the pot.

hole, hole cards

1. Face-down cards. Also "pocket cards". *I think Willy has two more queens in the hole.*
2. A seat, often preceded by a number relative to the button. *Sara opened from the 2-hole.*

hole cam

a camera that displays a player's face-down cards ("hole cards") to television viewers. Also "pocket cam".

Hollywood

Overt acting to deceive other players. *Karl had a big smile when he bet, but it seemed too Hollywood to me, so I called anyway.*

home game

A game played at a private venue (usually the home of one of the players), as opposed to a casino or public cardroom.

hop the fence

The enter the pot with a cold call.

horse

A player financially backed by someone else. *I lost today, but Larry was my horse in the stud game, and he won big.*

H.O.R.S.E.

See [H.O.R.S.E.](#).

hunt

Looking further into the deck after the hand is over to see what cards would have come next. Also "fox hunt", "rabbit hunt".

I

idiot end, ignorant end

The bottom end of a straight. Compare to "[sucker straight](#)".

immortal

Unbeatable; often said of a hand that a player knows cannot be beaten under the circumstances of play. Also "lock", "nuts".

implied odds, implied pot odds

See implied pot odds.

improve

To achieve a better hand than one currently holds by adding or exchanging cards as provided in the rules of the game being played. *I didn't think Paula was bluffing, so I decided not to call unless I improved on the draw.*

inside straight

See inside straight draw. Also "[belly buster](#)", "[gutshot](#)". Compare to outside straight draw.

insurance

A "business" deal in which players agree to split or reduce a pot (roughly in proportion to the chances of each of them winning) with more cards to come rather than playing out the hand, or else a deal where one player makes a side bet against himself with a third party to hedge against a large loss.

in the bushes, in the weeds

A player [slow playing](#) is said to be "in the bushes" during the time he is quietly checking and calling while others bet aggressively. He will eventually "[decloak](#)".

in the middle

1. In a game with multiple [blinds](#), an incoming player may sometimes be allowed to post the blinds "in the middle" (that is, out of their normal order) rather than having to wait for them to pass.
2. A player being whipsawed is said to be "in the middle".

in the money

To place high enough in a [poker tournament](#) to get prize money.

in turn

A player, or an action, is said to be in turn if that player is expected to act next under the rules. *Jerry said "check" while he was in turn, so he's not allowed to raise.*

irregular declaration

An action taken by a player in turn that is not a straightforward declaration of intent, but that is reasonably interpreted as an action by other players, such as pointing a thumb up to signify "raise". [House rules](#) or dealer discretion may determine when such actions are meaningful and/or binding.

irregularity

Any of a number of abnormal conditions in play, such as unexpectedly exposed cards, that may call for corrective action. See [Public cardroom rules \(poker\)](#).

isolation

See [isolation \(poker\)](#).

ITM

Abbreviation of [in the money](#).

J

jack it up

To raise.

jackpot

1. A game of "jackpot poker" or "jackpots", which is a variant of [five-card draw](#) with an [ante](#) from each player, no [blinds](#), and an [opening](#) requirement of a pair of jacks or better.
2. A large pool of money collected by the house and awarded for some rare occurrence, typically a bad beat.

jam

To open or raise the maximum amount allowed.

juice

Money collected by the house. Also "[vig](#)", "[vigorish](#)". See [Rake \(poker\)](#).

K

keep (a bettor) honest

To call a final bet while not expecting to win, for the primary purpose of discouraging future bluffs.

kicker

See kicker (poker).

kill game, kill pot

See kill game.

kitty

A pool of money built by collecting small amounts from certain pots, often used to buy refreshments, cards, and so on. The home-game equivalent of a rake.

L

laydown

A tough choice to fold a good hand in anticipation of superior opposition.

limit

The minimum or maximum amount of a bet.

limp, limp in

To enter a pot by simply calling instead of raising.

live

1. Still raisable. A live bet is one which a player can raise even if they've already bet and everyone else has made a call, typically because the player posted a blind or straddle.
2. A game full of unskilled or bad players.

lock up

To "lock up" a seat in a cash game means to place a poker chip, player's card, or other personal effect on the table in front of the seat, to signify that the seat is occupied even though the player may not be present.

loose

See loose/tight play. Compare to "[tight](#)", "[aggressive](#)", "[passive](#)".

loose cannon

A player who is not afraid to put money in the pot; one who is "gambling" a lot and liable to lose all his money at any given time.

low

1. The lowest card by rank.
2. The low half of the pot in a [high-low split](#).

M

M-ratio

In no-limit or pot limit games the ratio of stack to the blinds and/or antes. For example 8-way in a no limit game hold'em game with blinds of \$50/\$100 and an ante of \$10 a stack of \$23,000 has an M-ratio of 100. To further clarify, $M = \$23,000 / [\$100 + \$50 + (\$10 * 8)] = 100$.

made hand

See [made hand](#). Compare to a drawing hand.

maniac

A loose and aggressive player. A player who bets constantly and plays many inferior hands.

match the pot

To put in an amount equal to all the chips in the pot.

misdeal

A deal which is ruined for some reason and must be redealt.

move in

In a no-limit game, to "move in" or to "go all in" means to bet one's entire stake on the hand in play. See [table stakes](#).

muck

1. To fold.
2. To discard one's hand without revealing the cards. Often done after winning without a [showdown](#) or at a showdown when a better hand has already been revealed.
3. The discard pile.

N

natural card

A card that isn't wild or otherwise modified by the game rules. In some houses, a natural hand beats an equivalent hand that uses wild cards, though this is not generally the case.

no-limit

See no-limit.

nuts, the

See [nut hand](#).

O

offsuit

Cards that are not of the same suit. *The ace of clubs and the king of spades are called ace-king offsuit*

one-eyed royals

See one-eyed royals.

open

To bet first. See open.

open ended, open ended straight draw

An outside straight draw. Also "two-way straight draw".

openers

The cards held by a player in a game of "jackpots" entitling him to open the pot. "Splitting openers" refers to holding onto one of your openers after discarding it to prove you had the necessary cards to open should you win the pot.

option

1. An optional bet or draw, such as getting an extra card facedown for 50 cents or raising on the big blind when checked all the way around.
2. The right to raise possessed by the [big blind](#) if there have been no raises.

out of pocket

A game which gives the players the ability to add more money to their stack in the middle of a hand. See [Table stakes](#).

outs

See [out \(poker\)](#).

outside straight, outside straight draw

See outside straight draw. Also "two-way straight draw".

overcall

To call a bet after others have called, esp. big bets. *Jim bet, Alice called, then Ted overcalled.* Compare to "[cold call](#)", "[flat call](#)", "[smooth call](#)".

overcard

1. A community card with a higher rank than a player's pocket pair.
2. A higher card. *Ted held two overcards to Jill's pair with two cards to come.*

overpair

In community card games such as Texas Hold'em and Omaha, a pocket pair with a higher rank than any community card.

over the top

To [reraise](#). *Ted raised \$20, then Alice came over the top for \$60 more.*

P

paint

The face cards, Jacks, Queens, and Kings, in a deck. In [Texas hold'em](#), a flop can be said to be "all paint" if it consists of only these cards.

pair

See one pair

passive

A style of play characterized by checking and calling. Compare to "[aggressive](#)", "[loose](#)", "[tight](#)".

pat

Already complete. A hand is a pat hand when, say, a [straight](#) comes on the first five cards in [Texas hold'em](#).

pick-up

When the house picks up cash from the dealer after a player buys chips.

pigeon

A bad player. Also "[donkey](#)", "[fish](#)".

play twice

See "deal twice".

pocket pair

In [community card poker](#) or [stud poker](#), when two of a player's private cards make a pair. Also "[wired pair](#)".

poker face

A blank face that does not reveal anything about the cards being held. Often used metaphorically outside the world of poker.

position

See [position \(poker\)](#).

position bet

A bet that is made more due to the strength of the bettor's [position](#) than the strength of the bettor's cards.

post

To make the required small or big [blind](#) bet in [Texas Hold 'em](#) or other games played with blinds rather than antes

post dead

To post a bet amount equal to the small and the big blind combined (the amount of the large blind playing as a live blind, and the amount of the small blind as dead money). In games played with blinds, a player who steps away from the table and misses his turn for the blinds must either post dead or wait for the big blind to re-enter the game. Compare to "dead blind".

post oak bluff

See [post oak bluff](#).

pot

See [pot \(poker\)](#).

pot limit

See pot limit.

pot odds

See [pot odds](#).

probe bet

A bet after the flop by a player who did not take the lead in betting before the flop (and when the player that did take the lead in betting before the flop declined to act). Compare to "continuation bet".

proposition player, prop

A player that gets paid an hourly rate to start poker games or to help them stay active. Prop players play with their own money, which distinguishes them from shills, who play with the casino's money.

protect, protection

See [protection \(poker\)](#).

push

To put yourself all-in.

Q

quads

Four of a kind.

quarter

To win a quarter of a pot, usually by tying the low or high hand of a [high-low split](#) game. Generally, this is an unwanted outcome, as it seldom wins enough money to cover the amount bet during the hand.

R

rabbit hunt

After a hand is over, a rabbit hunt means to reveal the last card that would have come up in a community card game with a fixed number of cards. Such activity is usually prohibited in casinos.

rack

1. A collection of 100 chips of the same denomination, usually arranged in 5 stacks in a plastic tray.
2. A plastic tray used for storing a rack of chips.

rags

Worthless (or apparently worthless) cards. Most often refers to small cards in high-hand games, while high cards in low games are more often called "[bricks](#)" or "[bombs](#)". Also "[blank](#)".

rail

The rail is the sideline at a poker table - the (often imaginary) rail separating spectators from the field of play. Watching from the rail means watching a poker game as a spectator. People on the rail are sometimes called railbirds.

rainbow

Three or four cards of different suits, especially said of a [flop](#).

raise

See raise.

rake

See [rake \(poker\)](#). Also "[juice](#)", "[vig](#)", "[vigorish](#)".

rakeback

Rebate/repayment to a player of a portion the rake paid by the player, normally from a non-cardroom, third-party source such as an affiliate. Applies only to online poker.

ram and jam

To aggressively bet, raise, and reraise.

ratholing

To "[go south](#)".

rebuy

An amount of chips purchased after the buy-in.

redeal

To deal a hand again, possibly after a misdeal.

redraw

1. To make one hand and have a draw for a better hand. *Ted made a straight on the turn with a redraw for a flush on the river..*
2. Second or later draws in a draw game with multiple draws.

reraise

Raise after one has been raised. Also coming "over the top".

ring game

See [ring game](#).

river

See [river \(poker\)](#).

river rat

A player whose hand was dominated from the start, but improves his hand on the river to win the pot.

rock

1. A very [tight](#) player (plays very few hands and only continues with strong hands).
2. A bundle of chips held together with a rubber band, or other token signifying an obligatory live straddle. If the player [under the gun](#) has the rock, he must use it to post a live straddle. The winner of the pot collects the rock and is obligated to use it in turn.

rolled-up trips

In [seven-card stud](#), three of a kind dealt in the first three cards.

rounder

See [rounder](#).

runner

A tournament entrant, a contestant.

runner-runner

A hand made by hitting two consecutive cards on the [turn](#) and [river](#). Also "[backdoor](#)". Compare to "bad beat".

rush

Winning streak. A player who has won several big pots recently is said to be *on a rush*.

S

sandbag

See [slow play \(poker\)](#).

satellite

A tournament in which the prize is a free entrance to another (larger) tournament.

scare card

A card that comes that may have improved an opponent's hand. *The Jack of spades on the turn was a scare card because it put both flush and straight possibilities on the board.*

scoop

In high-low split games, to win both the high and the low half of the pot.

semi-bluff

See semi-bluff.

set

Three of a kind, esp. the situation where two of the cards are concealed in the player's [hole](#) cards. Compare to "[trips](#)".

set-up

A deck that has been ordered, usually King to Ace by suit (spades, hearts, clubs and diamonds). In casinos, it is customary to use a set-up deck when introducing a new deck to the table. The set-up is spread face up for the players to demonstrate that all of the cards are present before the first shuffle. Also called to "spade the deck".

shill

See shill. Compare to "proposition player".

shootout

A [poker tournament](#) format where the last remaining player of a table goes on to play the remaining players of other tables. Each table plays independently of the others; that is, there is no balancing as players are eliminated. This format is particularly common in European televised poker programs, including Late Night Poker.

showdown

See [showdown \(poker\)](#).

side pot

A separate pot created to deal with the situation of one player going "all in". See [table stakes](#).

16-way straight draw

A hand in [draw poker](#) such as 6H 7H 8S (Joker), in which any of sixteen cards (4 fours, 4 fives, 4 nines, 4 tens) can fill a straight.

slow play

See [slow play \(poker\)](#). Also "sandbag".

slow roll

To delay or avoid showing one's hand at showdown, forcing other players to expose their hands first. When done while holding a good hand likely to be the winner, it is considered poor etiquette, because it often gives other players "false hope" that their hands might win before the slow-roller's is exposed.

small blind

See blinds.

small blind special

A situation in which (assuming no raising) a player is dealt weak hole cards in the small blind, but ends up making the best hand because they got to see a relatively inexpensive flop. Compare to "[big blind special](#)".

smooth call

A "[flat call](#)". Compare to "[cold call](#)", "[overcall](#)".

speeding

To play very loose with no identifiable pattern, or to bluff frequently. Also known as speeding around. Compare to "[fast](#)".

spike

When a flop is spread out, if the first card revealed is the card an underdog needs, they spike that card. More loosely, if any of the flop cards help you, then you spike it. *I had Q9 to my opponent's pocket jacks, but I spiked a queen on the flop to take the lead.*

splash the pot

To throw one's chips in the pot in a disorderly fashion. Not typically allowed, because the dealer can't tell how much has been bet.

split

See [split \(poker\)](#) and [high-low split](#).

spread

The range between a table's minimum and maximum bets.

stack

A collection of 20 [poker chips](#) of the same denomination, usually arranged in an orderly column.

stakes

The definition of the amount one buys in for and can bet. For example, a "low stakes" game might be a \$10 buy-in with a \$1 maximum raise.

stand pat

In [draw poker](#), playing the original hand using no draws, either as a bluff or in the belief it is the best hand.

starting hand

See [starting hand](#).

steal

See [steal \(poker\)](#).

steam

Act of playing recklessly when one is frustrated. Compare to "[tilt](#)".

stop 'n go

When a player bets into another player who has previously raised or otherwise shown [aggression](#). Example: On the flop, Bill bets into Tom, Tom raises, and Bill just calls. On the turn, Bill bets into Tom again. Bill has just pulled a stop 'n go.

straddle bet

See straddle bets.

straight

1. Poker hand: see straight.
2. When used with an amount, indicates that the speaker is referring to the total bet, versus the amount being raised. *Alice bets twenty. Bob raises to fifty straight.* Also "[altogether](#)" or "[all day](#)".

straight flush

See straight flush.

strategy card

A wallet sized card that is commonly used to help with poker strategies in online and casino games.

string bet

To call with one motion and raise with another, or to reach for more chips in the middle of laying a bet/raise without stating the intended amount. String bets are prohibited in [public cardroom rules](#). Compare to "[forward motion](#)".

stuck

Having lost money. *I'm stuck \$300 right now.*

stud

1. A variant of poker. See [stud poker](#).
2. A card dealt face up in Stud poker.

suck out

To draw a winning hand despite poor odds.

sucker straight

In [community card poker](#) variants, a straight completed on the low end of the possible straight on the board. Compare to "[idiot end, ignorant end](#)".

suited

Having the same suit. See card suits.

suited connectors

See suited connectors.

super satellite

A multi-table [poker tournament](#) in which the prize is a free entrance to a satellite tournament or a tournament in which all the top finishers gain entrance to a larger tournament.

T

table stakes

See [table stakes](#).

tell

See [tell \(poker\)](#).

third man walking

A player who gets up from his seat in a cash game, after two other players are already away from the table, is referred to as the "third man walking". In a casino with a "third man walking rule", this player may be required to return to his seat within 10 minutes, or one rotation of the deal around the table, or else his seat in the game will be forfeited if there is a waiting list for the game.

throwing a party

A player who is playing like a fool and gambling all of their money away is said to be *throwing a party*.

three of a kind

See three of a kind. Also "[trips](#)", "[set](#)".

tight

See loose/tight play. Compare to "[loose](#)", "[aggressive](#)", "[passive](#)".

tilt

See [tilt \(poker\)](#). Compare to "[steam](#)".

trey

A 3-spot card. Casino personnel refer to the 3C as the "trey of clubs".

trips

Three of a kind. Compare to "[set](#)".

turn

See [turn \(poker\)](#).

12-way straight draw

A hand in [draw poker](#) such as 6H 7H (Joker) 9C, in which any of twelve cards (4 fives, 4 eights, 4 tens) can fill a straight.

U

under the gun

The playing position to the direct left of the blinds in [Texas hold 'em](#) or [Omaha](#) . The player who is under the gun must act first on the first round of betting.

underfull

In a [community card](#) game, a full house that is one of the lowest full houses possible. For example: in [Texas hold 'em](#), a player holding a pair of deuces with a final board of 2A33Q holds an underfull (Deuces full of Treys). The highest possible full house is Aces full of Treys. Also "underboat".

up

When used with a card rank to describe a poker hand, refers to two pair with the named card being the higher pair. For example, a hand of QQ885 might be called "queens up".

upcard

See upcard.

up the ante

Increase the stake. Also commonly used outside the context of poker.

V

value bet

See [value \(poker\)](#).

vig, vigorish

The [rake](#).

vnh

Abbreviation for "very nice hand", used in [online poker](#) chat.

W

wash

To mix the deck by spreading the cards face down on the table and mixing them up. A dealer may wash the deck before shuffling.

weak ace

An ace with a low kicker (e.g. four). Also "small ace," "soft ace," "ace-rag."

wheel

See wheel.

whipsaw

When a player is caught in the middle between two raisers and must call each bet because of the pot odds. Compare to "crossfire".

wild card

See [wild card \(poker\)](#). Compare to [bug \(poker\)](#).

window card

An upcard in [stud poker](#). The first window card in stud is called the "door card".

wired pair

A "[pocket pair](#)".

wrap

In [Omaha](#), the term for an open ended straight that consists of two board cards and three or four cards from a player's hand. An example would be a player holding 345A with the board 67K is said to have a "wrap" as any 3, 4, or 5, or 8 will make a straight. A hand of 4589 would also be a wrap draw, but would often be referred to as a "big wrap" due to twenty cards making the straight as opposed to thirteen in the first example.

Z

Contents: Top - 0-9 A [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)
[Home](#) | [Rollout](#) | [Slang names for poker hands](#)

Rollout

Rollout or **roll 'em out** is [poker jargon](#) used for a game phase in certain [poker variants](#). It is often incorrectly called "[roll your own](#)", to which it has similarities but is fundamentally different from.

Poker games with a rollout phase resemble [stud poker](#) but have significantly different strategies, because players generally receive all of their cards up front (sometimes with a draw phase), and know the final value of their hand in early betting rounds. They resemble stud poker only in that cards are revealed to other players one at a time for each betting round.

There are the same three variations on the idea as with roll your own, depending on when players are allowed to choose which card to reveal. They can either be forced to arrange the order of their cards before any betting begins ("choose before"), or they can be

allowed to choose cards in later rounds based on information found in earlier rounds ("choose after"). In the latter case, the revealing can be made simultaneously or in turn.

In the game of **show five**, for example, each player is dealt seven cards before any betting begins, and each of the game's five betting rounds begins with the players simultaneously revealing one of their cards ("simultaneous choose-after rollout"). Rollout games are frequently played [high-low split](#), and players choose which cards to reveal in order to delay as long as possible revealing which half of the pot they intend to win.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Slang names for poker hands

In [poker](#), players may often use slang terms for particular types of [hands](#). Though most are recent neologisms, others date to poker's antiquity. All such slang terms typically connect a common concept (from life experience or storytelling) to the hand, in order to more easily characterize its general status relative to other hands. The terms range from whimsical to bawdy, with some being of a racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise controversial nature.

The following lists should not be confused with "official" poker terminology. See [poker jargon](#).

Individual card slang

The following table lists slang terms commonly associated with individual cards:

Card Slang name

A Bullet, Rocket

K Cowboy

KH Alexander

KD Ceasar

KS David

KC Charles (Charlemagne)

Q Lady, Bitch, Girl, Cowgirl, Mop Squeezer

QH Judith (may come from Bible)

QD Rachel (may come from Bible)

QS Black Bitch

J Johnny, Jackal, Knave, Hook (play on shape), **Valet** (from French)

T Dime

8 Snowman (play on shape), **Ocho** (from Spanish)

7 Hockey Stick, Walking Stick, Candy Cane (play on shape)

5 Nickel

4 Sailboat (play on shape)

3 **Trey** (standard usage, not slang), **Crab** (play on shape)

2 **Deuce** (standard usage, not slang), **Duck** (play on deuce), **Quacker** (play on duck)

Five-card hand slang

Refer to the article on [Rank of hands \(poker\)](#) for more information about poker hands.

Hand - Slang name

Straight flush, ace to five - **Steel wheel**

Four of a kind - **Book, Quads** (e.g., "Quad Kings")

Four of a kind, aces - **Four Pips** (Each ace has one pip)

Full house - **Full boat, Boat, Full** . A full house is commonly referred to as **Xs full of Ys** where X is the three of a kind and Y is the pair. For example, 555KK would be "fives full of kings"

Flush of hearts or diamonds - **Pink, All Pink**

Flush of clubs or spades - **Blue, All Blue**

Flush of clubs - **Golf Bag, Puppy Feet, Puppy Toes, Pups**

Straight, ten to ace - **Broadway**

Straight, ace to five - **Wheel, Bicycle, Bike**

Three of a kind - **Trips** (or Trip as in *Ted has trip kings.*), **Set** . In [Hold 'em](#) the term "set" refers to when a player has a pair in the hole and one matching card on the board, with "trips" referring to a pair on the board and one in the hand or three of a kind on the board.

Three of a kind, kings - **Klan Rally, Alabama Night Riders, Three Wise Men**

Three of a kind, sixes - **Devil's hand, Mark of the Beast** (referring to the Number of the Beast in the Book of Revelation)

Two pair, aces and eights - [Dead Man's Hand](#) (hand held by Wild Bill Hickok when he was shot and killed)

Two pair - Two pair is commonly shorthanded as **Xs up** or **Xs over Ys**, with the top pair as X and the bottom pair as Y. For example, KK998 would be "kings up" or "kings over nines".)

One pair, aces - **Aces and spaces** (a hand with one pair of aces, and nothing else. Used derogatorily, especially in games such as seven-card stud, where two pair is a typical winning hand)

Outside straight draw - **Bobtail, Open-ended** . An outside straight draw: cards of two different ranks could complete the high or low end of the straight (e.g., _3456_)

Outside straight flush draw - **Big Bobtail**

Inside straight draw - **Gutshot, Belly buster** . An inside straight draw: only cards of a single rank could complete the straight (e.g., 34_67)

Double inside straight draw - **Double gutshot, Double belly buster** . Double inside straight draw: cards of two different ranks could fill gaps in the straight (e.g., 2_456_8)

Texas hold'em slang

The following refer to hole (pocket) cards in [Texas hold 'em](#):

Starting hand Slang name

AA Pocket Rockets, American Airlines, Bullets, Two Pips

AK Big Slick (originally referred to ASKS, but the name has become common for any Ace-King, especially suited), **Anna Kournikova** (looks good but rarely wins), **Machine Gun** (AK-47), **Walking Back to Houston** ("I can see you learned to play in Houston. Those Houston players would come to Dallas and play that ace-king, but they'd always end up against a pair of aces. That's why we call that hand 'Walking back to Houston.'" - T.J. Cloutier, quoted by Barry Greenstein)

AQ Little Slick, Big Chick, Mrs. Slick

AJ Blackjack, Ajax

A8 [Dead Man's Hand](#) (by analogy with Wild Bill's aces and eights)

A3 Baskin-Robbins (plays off the number 31: 31 Flavors), **Friday The 13th** (An ace played low would be considered equivalent to 1)

A2 Acey-Deucey, Drinking Age

KK Cowboys, Elvis Presley, King Kong, Ace Magnets

KQ Marriage, Royalty

KQ suited Royal Marriage

KQ unsuited Mixed Marriage

KQ hearts Valentine's Day

KJ Kojak, King John

K9 Canine, Dog, Fido, Sawmill

K3 King Crab, Alaska Hand

QQ Cowgirls, Ladies, Siegfried & Roy, Hilton Sisters, Olsen Twins, Dykes, Girls with curls, Bitches, Mop squeezers

QJ Maverick (the theme song for the television series "Maverick" speaks of the title character as "livin' on jacks and queens")

QT Q-Tip, Varkonyi (named after Robert Varkonyi, 2002 World Series of Poker main event champion, who rather liked this hand)

Q9 Quinine

Q7 Computer Hand (according to a computer simulation, the hand of non-connected cards that makes the most straights)

Q3 Gay Waiter, San Francisco Busboy ("Queen with a trey")

Q3 suited Posh Gay Waiter

QH3H Flaming Gay Waiter

JJ Fishhooks, Hooks, Jokers

JT Cloutier (play on name: T. J. Cloutier)

JC9C T.J. Cloutier (T.J. flopped three straight flushes with this hand in one year)

J7 Jack Daniel's (Jack Old No. 7)

J6 Railroad Hand

J5 **Motown, Jackson Five**
J4 **Flat Tire** ("What's a jack for?")
TT **Dimes, TNT**
T5 **Five and Dime, Woolworths**
T4 **Good Buddy, Over and Out, Roger That** (play on radio code 10-4), **Broderick Crawford**
T2 **Doyle Brunson, Texas Dolly** (Brunson won the [World Series of Poker](#) with it twice in a row—1976 and 1977)
99 **Wayne Gretzky** (his jersey number), **German Virgin** ("nein, nein" means "no, no" in German)
98 **Oldsmobile**
96 **Big Lick, Porno, Dinner for Two** (play on number 69)
96 suited **Prom Night** ("Sixty-nine suited")
9H6H **Valentine's Day**
95 **Dolly Parton** (she sang *Workin' 9 to 5*), **Full-time job**
94 **Gold Rush, San Francisco** (play off the number 49)
93 **The Sik**
92 **Montana Banana**
88 **Little Oldsmobile, Snowmen, Infinities , Double Infinity**
86 **Maxwell Smart** (Agent 86 in Get Smart)
83 **Raquel Welch**
77 **Hockey Sticks, Candy Canes, Walking Sticks**
76 **Philadelphia, Union Oil, Trombones** (from the song 76 Trombones)
75 **Heinz, Ketchup** (play on Heinz's *57 varieties*)
74 **Double Down, Blackjack hand**
73 **Hachem** (named for Joseph Hachem, winner of World Series of Poker, 2005 who won the \$7.5 million prize with this hand when he flopped a straight)
72 offsuit **The Hammer**
72 suited **Velvet Hammer**
66 **Route 66**
62 **Ainsworth**
55 **Presto, Speed Limit, Nickels**
54 **Jesse James, Colt 45** (both play off the number 45), **Moneymaker** (winning hand of Chris Moneymaker, 2003 World Series of Poker Main Event champion)
52 **Bomber** (B-52 bomber)
44 **Sailboats** (looks like two sails), **Midlife Crisis, Magnum, Luke Skywalker** ("May the fours be with you")
4S4C **Darth Vader** ("Dark Side Of The Fours")
33 **Crabs, Hooters**
32 **Can of Corn**
32 offsuit **Houta Hand** (pronounced like "Hooter", named for a Native American dealer who advocates playing this hand)
22 **Ducks** (from "deuces"), **Swans, Sleepers, Quack Quack**
any pocket pair **Wired pair, Wired** . For example, a starting hand of 8-8 might be called "wired eights" or "eights wired"

In addition, two types of hands are called "**blackjack** hands":

- Hands which are naturals in blackjack: any ace with any face or ten.
- Hands whose numeric total is 11: 9-2, 8-3, 7-4, 6-5. (In blackjack, such hands are very good for players.)

Omaha slang

[Omaha](#) slang is not as well developed as Texas Hold'em. The game is not as widely played, and there is a much greater variety of hands, since the pocket is four cards. In the hole in [Omaha hold'em](#):

Hand Slang name

A-K-4-7 **Assault Rifle**

Flop slang

The following terms refer to the [flop](#) in [Omaha hold'em](#) and [Texas hold'em](#):

Flop Slang name

Three different suits **Rainbow**

Three face cards **Paint** (can also be used to refer to any picture card. *I need to hit **paint*** indicates somebody who is looking for a J,Q,K.)

Three low cards **Rags, Ragged flop** (cards unlikely to have helped anyone)

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker players

[Home](#) | [Computer poker players](#) | [Poker Hall of Fame](#) | [World Poker Tour Walk of Fame](#)

Computer poker players

The game of [poker](#) (or at least most of the variants) is considered to be computationally intractable. However, methods are being developed to at least approximate perfect strategy from the combinatorial game theory perspective in the heads-up (two player) game, and increasingly good systems are being created for the multi-player or [ring game](#). Perfect strategy has multiple meanings in this context. From a game-theoretic optimal point of view, a perfect strategy is a minimax one that cannot expect to lose to any other player's strategy; however, optimal strategy can vary in the presence of sub-optimal players who have weaknesses that can be exploited. In this case, a perfect strategy would be one that correctly or closely models those weaknesses and takes advantage of them to make a profit. Some of these systems are based on Bayes theorem, Nash equilibrium, Monte Carlo simulation and Neural networks. A large amount of the research is being done at the University of Alberta by the GAMES group led by Jonathan Schaeffer who developed Poki and PsOpt. The Poki engine has been licensed for the entertainment game STACKED featuring Canadian poker player Daniel Negreanu.

One major aspect of poker is being a game of imperfect information. Some cards in play are concealed, so the players cannot deduce the exact state the game is in. This fundamentally differs from games like chess where all information about the game's current state is public. A major part of the skill of live poker games, however, is guessing at the strength of a player's hand by identifying [tells](#) made by other players, while concealing one's own. As a computer would not make any physical tells, playing against a computer would necessitate reading tells only from the bets placed. Once the 'mind' of the computer is known it can be exploited.

Although you cannot read a computer opponent, playing against computer opponents can still help you sharpen your skills by learning how to count outs and play the percentages. With the advancing technology of artificial intelligence, computer players can be created to incorporate bluffs and other human-like decisions.

Pokerbots are bots or computer programs that play [online poker](#) disguised as a human opponent. Online poker rooms prohibit the use of bots like [WinHoldEm](#).

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker Hall of Fame

The **Poker Hall of Fame** is a group of [poker](#) players who have played poker well against top competition for high stakes over a long period of time. It is awarded by Binion's Horseshoe casino.

Members of the Poker Hall of Fame include (with year of induction):

Johnny Moss, 1979
"Nick the Greek" Dandolos, 1979
Felton "Corky" McCorquodale, 1979
Red Winn, 1979
Sid Wyman, 1979
"Wild Bill" Hickok, 1979
Edmond Hoyle, 1979
T. "Blondie" Forbes, 1980
Bill Boyd, 1981
Tom Abdo, 1982
Joe Bernstein, 1983
Murph Harrold, 1984
Red Hodges, 1985
Henry Green, 1986
Walter Clyde "Puggy" Pearson, 1987
Doyle Brunson, 1988
Jack "Treetop" Straus, 1988
Fred "Sarge" Ferris, 1989
Benny Binion, 1990
"Chip" Reese, 1991
"Amarillo Slim" Preston, 1992
Jack Keller, 1993
Little Man Popwell, 1996
Roger Moore, 1997
Stu Ungar, 2001
Lyle Berman, 2002
Johnny Chan, 2002
Bobby Baldwin, 2003
Berry Johnston, 2004
Jack Binion, 2005
Crandell Addington, 2005

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

World Poker Tour Walk of Fame

The **World Poker Tour Walk of Fame** is designed to honor those [poker](#) players who have played the game well at the highest levels as well as those who have promoted the spread of it through film, television, and literature. It was started in 2004.

In February 2004, The World Poker Tour Walk of Fame inducted its first members at the Commerce Casino in a ceremony before top pros and celebrities in town for the World Poker Tour Invitational Poker Tournament. The induction ceremony was staged on the doorstep of Commerce Casino, the Los Angeles region's most prestigious gaming establishment and full service entertainment/hotel complex. Poker room to the stars of Hollywood, Commerce Casino has a rich history of poker in Southern California dating back to 1983.

The next group of honorees will be inducted in February 2006 when The World Poker Tour Walk of Fame is embedded in its permanent location in the casino's forecourt.

The inductees, along with the year they were inducted are as follows:

- Doyle Brunson, 2004
- Gus Hansen, 2004
- James Garner, 2004

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker on television

Poker television programs have been extremely popular in the last several years, especially in North America and Europe. This has especially become the case since the invention of the "pocket cam" in 1997 (and its first use in the United States in 2002), wherein viewers at home can see what each player has.

History

Poker has been appearing on television somewhat regularly since the late-1970s. In the United States, ESPN started airing the [World Series of Poker](#) (WSOP) as an annual one hour event around this time. For many years, the coverage was less than robust because viewers at home could not see what cards the players had. Instead, the coverage essentially involved the commentators guessing what cards the players had.

This all changed in 1997 with the introduction of the hole cam in Europe and later introduction into the United States in 2002. The hole cam was patented by WSOP bracelet winner Henry Orenstein and first used in the Late Night Poker television series. It was used again in the inaugural Poker Million tournament in 2000 which boasted the attraction of the first £1,000,000 poker game on live television.

The usage of the hole cam expanded from Europe to North America in 2002 when it was first used in the coverage of the 2002 WSOP. The World Poker Tour (WPT) was formed later that year and began airing in 2003, attracting numerous new poker fans and leading to increased numbers of entrants to live [poker tournaments](#) and increased investment in [online poker](#).

Since the introduction of the hole cam, poker has become almost ubiquitous in the US and Europe. Whilst poker started on sports channels such as ESPN and Sky Sports has expanded to such "non traditional" networks as Bravo and GSN. Most of the shows that shown are poker tournaments with the exception of GSN's "High Stakes Poker", which shows a never ending [cash game](#). All of the poker programs make heavy use of the aforementioned pocket cam plus a general format of a "straightman" and a "comedian" type, often a poker pro.

Poker's growth in Europe led to the creation of two FTA channels: The Poker Channel and Pokerzone. Both began broadcasting during 2005.

[Home](#) | [Hole cam](#)

Hole cam

In [poker](#), a **hole cam** (or pocket cam) is a camera that displays a player's face-down cards (known as "hole cards") to television viewers. It was patented by Henry Orenstein in 1995.

The hole cam became popular when the Late Night Poker program first began using it in televised tournaments. Cameras were also used in the Poker Million prior to gaining

further popularity after the World Poker Tour began airing on the Travel Channel in 2003 and the ESPN broadcasts of the 2003 World Series of Poker.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

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[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Index

Online Poker

- [Online poker](#)
 - [Card games](#)
 - [Poker](#)
 - [Poker topics](#)
- [Poker rules](#)
 - [Poker hands](#)
 - [Dead man's hand](#)
 - [Dominating hand](#)
 - [Drawing hand](#)
 - [Made hand](#)
 - [Nut hand](#)
 - [Pocket Aces](#)
 - [Starting hand](#)
 - [Non-standard poker hand](#)
 - [Rank of hands](#)
 - Domination
 - Kicker
 - Open-ended
 - [Betting structure](#)
 - [Big bet](#)
 - [Blind](#)
 - [Chopping the blinds](#)
 - [Closed](#)
 - [Post oak bluff](#)
 - [Pot](#)
 - [Split](#)
 - [River](#)
 - [Showdown](#)
 - [Table stakes](#)
 - [Poker variants](#)
 - [Blind man's bluff](#)
 - [Casino game](#)
 - [Four card poker](#)
 - [Let It Ride](#)
 - [Pai gow poker](#)
 - [Pyramid poker](#)
 - [Red Dog](#)
 - [Three card poker](#)
 - [Three card brag](#)

- [Chicago](#)
- [Chinese poker](#)
- [Community card poker](#)
 - [Counterfeit](#)
 - [Omaha hold 'em](#)
 - [Texas hold 'em](#)
 - [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#)
 - [Texas hold 'em hands](#)
 - [Texas Hold'em Bonus Poker](#)
 - [WinHoldEm](#)
- [Dealer's choice](#)
- [Draw poker](#)
 - [Anaconda](#)
 - [Badugi](#)
 - [Five-card draw](#)
 - [Lowball](#)
- [H.O.S.E](#)
 - [H.O.R.S.E.](#)
- [Kuhn poker](#)
 - [Old Pink Poker](#)
- [Strip poker](#)
- [Stud poker](#)
 - [Caribbean stud poker](#)
 - [Five-card stud](#)
 - [Roll your own](#)
 - [Seven twenty-seven](#)
 - [Seven-card stud](#)
 - [Twist](#)
- [Public cardroom rules](#)
 - [One player to a hand](#)
 - [Poker dealer](#)
- [Cheating in poker](#)
- [Rule variations](#)
 - [High-low split](#)
 - [Wild card](#)
 - [Bug](#)
 - [Stripped deck](#)
 - [Community card](#)
 - [Turn](#)
- [Poker strategy](#)
 - [Fundamental theorem of poker](#)
 - [Morton's theorem](#)
 - [Pot odds](#)
 - [Dead money](#)

- [Poker play](#)
 - [Aggression](#)
 - [Bluff](#)
 - [Check-raise](#)
 - [Defense](#)
 - [Draw](#)
 - [Isolation](#)
 - [Position](#)
 - [Protection](#)
 - [Slow play](#)
 - [Steal](#)
- [Poker probability](#)
- [Poker psychology](#)
 - [Tell](#)
 - [Tilt](#)
- [Poker gameplay and terminology](#)
 - [Bad beat](#)
 - [Cards speak](#)
 - [Declaration](#)
 - [Flop](#)
 - [Freeroll](#)
 - [Out](#)
 - [Poker equipment](#)
 - [Button](#)
 - [Playing card](#)
 - [Burn card](#)
 - [Curse of Scotland](#)
 - [High card by suit](#)
 - [Rounder](#)
 - [Poker chip](#)
 - [Rake](#)
 - [Ring game](#)
 - [Suited connectors](#)
- [Value](#)
- [Poker tournaments](#)
 - [Chip race](#)
 - [Hand-for-hand](#)
 - [Satellite tournament](#)
 - [Tournament director](#)
 - [World Poker Tour](#)
 - [World Series of Poker](#)
- [Poker jargon](#)
 - [Rollout](#)
 - [Slang names for poker hands](#)

- [Poker players](#)
 - [Computer poker players](#)
 - [Poker Hall of Fame](#)
 - [World Poker Tour Walk of Fame](#)
 - [Poker on television](#)
 - [Hole cam](#)
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- [Home](#)

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